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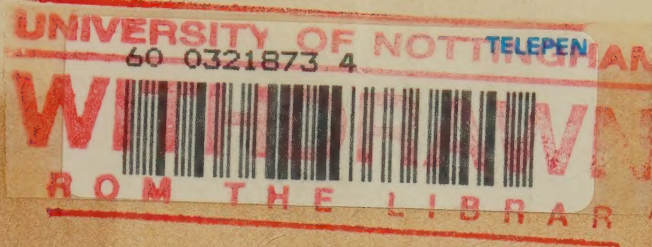
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THE PHYSIOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

Physiology of Marriage

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Honoré de Balzac

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The
Physiology of Marriage

OR
MEDITATIONS OF AN ECLECTIC PHILOSOPHER
ON HAPPINESS AND UNHAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

BY
Honoré de Balzac

TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION

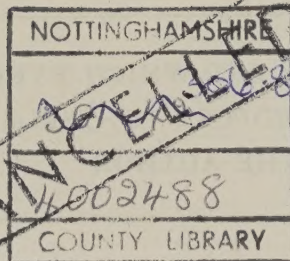
Francis Macnamara

HAPPINESS IS THE END WHICH EVERY SOCIETY
SHOULD PROPOSE TO ITSELF ***
THE AUTHOR

The Casanova Society
MCMXXV

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Physiology of Marriage is limited to 1,000
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No. 569

NOTICE

If any woman be tempted by the title of this work to open it, she may save herself the trouble, for she has read it already without knowing it. No man, however malicious he may be, can ever say of women either so much evil or so much good, as they already think of themselves. If in spite of this notice any woman insist on reading the work, the law of delicacy will forbid her to rail at the author, seeing that he has deprived himself of that approbation which is most dear to artists: for here on the frontispiece of his book he engraves (as it were) the prudent motto, commonly placed over the door of a certain sort of establishments, "Ladies not admitted."

Dedication

Pay attention to these words on page 34: "The superior man to whom this book is dedicated." Is it not as much as to say, "To you?"—*The Author*.

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The Physiology of Marriage

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Translator's Preface

WHAT IS MARRIAGE ?



THIS book is an attempt to present a difficult paradox, which is no less than the assertion of love where there is no love, of pleasure where there is only painful effort; for inasmuch as it is a book about marriage, it deals with a state in which the natural impulse is no longer free, and inasmuch as it is a physiology or study of nature, it deals with the freedom of natural impulse. The paradoxical character of the subject conduces to epigram, the author has a hundred or more scattered throughout the book, so we may be excused if we say here, that there are only two women in the world: there is the woman you want and cannot have, in whose case love involves no contradiction, and there is the woman you have and do not want, in whose case dutiful service involves no contradiction, this form of love only becoming mysterious when we seek for its basis in nature; that is to say, when we are not content with a basis in law or morals, but must needs get behind these to discover the natural force, to which they give expression while suppressing another. That there is in man a love for the woman he has and does not want, as free and natural as his love for her sister, the woman he wants and cannot have, this is the paradox which Balzac labours to present: there can be no other meaning in a physiology of marriage, by whomsoever it were written, certainly there is no other in the fantastic drama here presented; it exhibits marriage as a living organism, a product of forces in humanity untrammelled by laws of Church or State or Society.

There is no such person as the woman you have and want, for however much you loved a woman when marrying her, that love cannot be continuous in the same form, it must die and be re-born in an opposite form: apart from the fact that wanting

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implies not having, two reasons can be shown for this necessity, which in truth are one and the same seen from opposite sides. Before marriage when the woman is an object of free choice, she is loved as one among the many of her sex, and it is the sex that is loved in her as its representative; for even if she is singled out for a particular beauty, or for any qualities that answer to the ideal of the male, these only make their appeal by the oppositeness of their form to his, as it were a placid water in which he sees the reflexion of his fire: but as soon as she is bound to him in marriage and is become familiar, she loses for her lover this quality of otherness, he will see beauty in the new woman over there, *the woman his wife was when he made choice of her*. Thus he can only be faithful to the woman in being unfaithful to his love, an idea that the Elizabethan poets delighted to toy with; he must love her no longer for her beauty or other qualifications of sex, he must discover an attraction in her inmost substance rather than in her form, an attraction that will gain instead of losing by familiarity: and there is an additional reason in the fact that her beauty will be crumbling, so that not only will the original love fail with marriage, but the visible object of it will be literally disappearing. Here then are two reasons why love must take an opposite form, but there is also a reason why it *will*, in the fact that love is by its very nature progressive, being always an impulse from self to other: as an outward impulse it identifies itself with the new and distant, and from that position becomes an inward impulse to the familiar; thus love naturally changes with the change in its object, whose gradual perfection and decline are themselves one of the manifestations of love, operating in the body first in one direction and then in another.

But if nature carries out the necessary change in love's direction, what is there for man to trouble his head about? Just this, that his head is all too prone to interfere with nature, especially by the fixing of her processes at one or other of their stages: therefore a lover or husband must be very watchful of himself, lest he cling to a form of love when it is dead, as he may do either from sentimentality or from brutish habit; this is the effort which Balzac calls on him to make, an effort in which he will be liberating his own pleasure. Before marriage love will be satisfied with the obtaining of the woman, but thereafter it finds in her a different

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objective, and wants to progress from possession of the woman to *enjoyment* of her: which means definite rejection of her as a thing in being, in order to study her as a process of development, through all the stages of material corruption; it means a realistic love of all that you may discover in her, love of qualities the most distasteful to you merely because they are hers, instead of the idealistic love you had for her at first, when you chose her as a person answering to your ideas, and in fact were only loving your own ideas.

As that earlier love aims no further than possession, there can only be enjoyment of the woman you are bound to, and to enjoyment there is an impulse surely as natural as to possession; this is what Balzac gives as the meaning of marriage, what attracted the great realist being the objective study of woman, as opposed to the lover's subjective study of his own ideal: but do not suppose, Reader, that with this explanation the difficulty vanishes, on the contrary it only becomes more enormous! For what proof has the husband of these our assertions, what motive to seek enjoyment of a particular woman, in whom he has none whatever to start with? that motive is in fact the end of a course of action, which cannot apparently begin without it! Duty may restrain him from taking another woman, but it will not excite him to seek enjoyment of the one he has, the terms of the contract only giving mutual possession: this arduous love involves service altogether in excess of duty, a very suicide of duty in fields of unapparent pleasure. It is only before marriage that love is a simple impulse to the attractive, in its opposite form love will be a conscious and painful effort, the object presenting no attractions until the effort has been made: what we have to discover is the faculty in man, by which the future possibility of enjoyment is divined, and love thus carried further even than fidelity, which as a fixation of love demands of the woman like fixity of being; we recognise that love is by its nature progressive, but want to know just how the law operates.

The solution of the difficulty is not given by Balzac in plain statement, otherwise there would be no need for this Preface: the fact is, Balzac was no philosopher at all, indeed he was so incapable of thought as to be hardly human; but in his *feeling* the Monster was infallible, he had an instinct for the light such as

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has never perhaps been given to another man, and it is only necessary to find a rational interpretation of his antics, to have an authoritative answer to every question. We are well aware of the danger in making this attempt, for the paradoxical love of marriage defies statement in cold prose, it is an idea that must be felt in the bones as Balzac felt it: but there is just one word, namely *memory*, which seems to us the key to the whole puzzle; for no other faculty gives us a view of a person's very self, the invisible identity persisting through all those changes of form, which culminate for a moment in the external ornament or qualification, before marriage attracting the lover by its appeal to sense. Is it not by the power of memory that a race is wedded to its own country, stubbornly disregarding the beauty or fertility of foreign climates, whose sensual appeal can only draw off the half-hearted in love? economic ties do not constitute love but are rather its result, the only possible cause being ancestral memory; and so as patriotism is essentially a case of married love, we shall venture to trace the operation of memory throughout the marriage described in this book. This must sound rather like an imposition on Balzac, but we hope to show, that though the idea of memory does not appear in plain statement, as a metal refined in the fire of intellect, the mass of the work is rich in its ore: for memory operates in unsuspected ways, which we shall find truly and vividly described, only under a variety of names that keep the secret of its identity; especially it gives knowledge of the *future* in showing the course of past development, and so it is through memory that the motive is felt, which in marriage is always ahead of the action.

FORM OF THE BOOK.

The perception of the future by memory we shall explain in due course, it is time now to look more particularly at Balzac's method: this is anything but metaphysical, though the Monster had all the metaphysics of the subject in his marrow; the war of the sexes is presented in a dramatic narrative, of a high order of comedy, interspersed with a burlesque science, which only ceases to be poetic when it becomes serious. The comedy may be pronounced of a high order for this reason, that the characters of husband and wife are highly idealised, not in the negative sense of romantic illusion, but positively, as Euclid idealised his

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lines and planes: Balzac's husband might be defined as maleness without femaleness, an idea that no more exists in reality than length without breadth, but yet is arrived at by the very intensity of the author's realism. Any husband that you know will often exhibit characteristics of the wife in this book, but the poet recognises that he is then playing a female part, is in fact more wife than husband; so not only is the comedy enlivened by the sharpening of the contrast, when none but male characteristics are given to the husband, but life also is more truly represented. For example, in the paradox love of the war the orthodox relation of the sexes is maintained, the male still figuring as the pursuer and the female as the pursued, although within this form (as we shall see) the war gives the female the initiative; thus the distinction of sex is never lost, as it would be if the husband equally rejected the wife in favour of other women, playing a female part in resisting the attraction of his mate: none the less he is accepting her challenge to war, inasmuch as it is her very repulsiveness that he is now pursuing, instead of the attractiveness that he pursued in the harmonious love of courtship.

Two negatives only make a positive, rejection of her repulsiveness was implied in his pursuit of her attractiveness, and so this would not be to join battle with her; it would be to follow still (though in the person of another) the attractive woman he married, whereas marriage demands divorce from that woman (even in the person of the wife): to feel the attraction in repulsiveness a man must not be facing outward to the world of sense, he must have turned inward to pursue his wife through the world of memory, which means divorcing from her as from all women. Without that metanoesis or change in love's direction, no matter how dutifully a man may resist the attraction of other women, his heart will never be opened to an opposite attraction in his wife, that which grows with familiarity; he will be vainly demanding of her the attraction of novelty, and so his fidelity will be a burden and the marriage a dead form: it is just the same with any unpleasant task, one can either do it as a duty with one's heart elsewhere, or one can exceed duty in anticipation of an unknown pleasure, which means drawing back into one's self exactly as Balzac's husband did, this being the whole significance of his Machiavellian policy. Do not suppose however, that our author

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indulged in any such analysis; like Aeschylus he did right without knowing why! Of literary style, meaning the ordered presentment of ideas, there is not a trace in this genial work; we are given a chaos of contradictions, flung together haphazard, and humorously dignified by the name of eclecticism: but as no method could more artistically suggest an idea that is itself a contradiction, and therefore opposed to all that is easy and flowing in life, the monstrous author may claim to be a true stylist.

There is a curious misunderstanding current about the book, which arises out of the term physiology, as used in connexion with marriage: evidently people have argued that there is no marriage in nature, therefore it can have no physiology, and marriage must be only a polite name for sexual pleasure. We have actually heard the book compared to the Khama-Sutra, an Oriental treatise on that science: which we can certainly imagine Balzac reading with interest, but only as an astronomer or a statesman might, by way of relaxation from his own subject. Balzac's subject, as he announces on the title-page, is marriage: which is undoubtedly a sexual relationship, but means love of the male for the whole woman, whereas in the Khama-Sutra it is only parts of her that are loved: and remember this, the idea of wholeness means more than the sum of the parts, it means an identity running through the woman's development in time, as well as through her expansion in space. On the basis of marriage in nature, the special aspect of it announced in the term physiology, Balzac says little or nothing, beyond occasional grumbling at the interference of law and morals: his method is to present a particular marriage in the conditions of nature, that is to say in a state of war or open competition, in which the legal obligation is simply ignored by the wife, nor does the husband make any appeal to it.

To the modern reader, reared on the psychological novels of the last half-century, the question of motive at once presents itself: firstly he wants to know why the wife persists in hostility to a devoted husband, whom presumably she loved in marrying him; and secondly, what seems even more to need accounting for, why the husband persists in devotion to a hostile wife, when surrounded by easy and amiable women, with whom the enemy is only anxious that he should occupy himself. Balzac was frankly not interested in motive, for he was dealing with conditions in

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which action is not free; what he delights to praise is patient endurance of the inevitable, which only paradoxically takes the form of action in this book, since motive is ahead of it and not behind. The springs of free action, the origin and nature of love, these are the theme of his contemporary Stendhal: whose book "On Love" is as definitely about the love which precedes marriage, when the man is still free to choose and therefore must search his heart, as this book is about the love which follows marriage, when the choice is made and there only remains a job to be tackled; Stendhal gives us the Iliad of love, with the inspired hero sailing proudly down the wind of impulse, Balzac the Odyssey, with the man of many shifts patiently tacking his way homeward, the book of marriage and of monsters! But it is to the modern Homer we must go for the idea in its purity; in Joyce's Ulysses we have the very love that is demanded of a husband, the love of things in all their distasteful reality, the love for ever breaking its form to follow matter through its process of corruption: was ever such a challenge brought to us from this Earth we are married to, this ageing mother and wife of Man, as the poet's mute exhortation to see in her disintegrating atoms the source of light, and all life in the passage of a single day? Never surely, unless it was Balzac's exhortation to see all women in a woman, to find the ideal in her by ceasing to idealise her; not demanding of her any perfection but only her love, until jealousy end in making her desire its own!

From Stendhal we hear nothing about the problem of the other man, but everything about the problem of the other woman; in Balzac this is just reversed, the ancient comedy of cuckoldry is well to the fore, while the mystery of the concentration of love on a particular woman is either ignored, or is made to rest on bald assumptions. For example, it is assumed that all husbands are jealous, "*un jaloux*" being used as a synonym for "*un mari*": but if jealousy supplies a motive for the husband's perseverance, the psychological devil in us moderns wants to get behind the jealousy, wants to know the nature of the love that it implies. In case this might seem mere tedious pedantry, resulting from a lack of the comic sense in the critic, it should be mentioned that Balzac himself in a certain passage shows the greatest impatience of this jealousy, which he has made the mainspring of his comedy;

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in fact he analyses the passion out of existence, saying that if a man is loved by his wife jealousy is illogical, and that if he is not loved it is ineffectual, wherefore this lordly possessiveness is truly but a form of fear: and yet throughout the book he praises husbands just in proportion to their jealous ardour! It is only one of many contradictions that we shall have to note, and as the solution is comparatively simple it may be given in passing: the aim of marriage is freedom from this fear called jealousy, but apathetic indifference would mean the death and not the freedom of marriage, therefore jealousy must be carried to an extreme in which it finds its own death; it must not be content with possession merely of the wife's person, but must strive to possess her heart's love, and when her desire thus becomes the desire of the husband, gradually his desire becomes hers, and so all occasion for jealousy ceases.

Another assumption is that all wives experience disillusion, and this is offered as a sufficient motive for the wife's infidelity: but we want to know what was the ideal implied in the illusion, and what hope there is of its realisation with one man more than another. And surely with reason, since Balzac himself treats it as axiomatic, that happiness is only attained through constancy in marriage! We are told without any explanation, that to kill an adulterous wife with her lover is no revenge, but the very best service you can render to both: which is a very interesting idea, and one for which we should be only too ready to hear reasons. Perhaps we are the more provoked to these inquiries, because we feel that Balzac had it in him to answer them: it might even be said that he did answer them, only the answers have to be felt for in his series of contradictions, of intellectual somersaults and pranks of every sort. This is not easy however, for there is no system in his contradictions, as in the economic treatise of the great Proud'hon; they rather aspire to imitate our inimitable Sterne, whose influence was strong upon Balzac at this time: but what elephantine capers the good Balzac cuts, in his laudable pursuit of that airy sprite, the superhumanly human creator of Tristram! Ah, but how artistic is his very failure! it serves to emphasise the uphill progress of marriage, while there is enough of play in it to disclose, even in the disguise of a plodding pilgrim, the winged boy himself.

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Take a notable contradiction that runs right through the book: the wife is presented on the one hand as a natural enemy, whose infidelity the husband must thwart by every sort of cunning; on the other hand we are told that she is a true reflexion of the husband, neither more nor less faithful to him than he is to himself. Again, we are told that the aim of marriage is happiness, meaning a recovery of the spontaneous love which precedes it; and along with this the husband is exhorted to dupe his wife into a condition of slavery! Most remarkable of all perhaps, the husband is given all sorts of hints and directions—at least so far as Balzac's extreme modesty will allow—on the art of keeping a woman's love while nightly sharing a bed with her; the whole being summed up in the epigram, almost inevitable even if the author were English, "The bed is the marriage:" yet we are also told, and told with extraordinary emphasis, that the best form of co-habitation for married couples is not only in separate beds, but even in separate rooms! It is a paradox which the author frankly confesses himself unable to explain: but the page on which he announces it is so tremulous with passion, that there can be no question as to its having a meaning, and a very profound meaning. We shall return to this great symbol presently; for it stands up like a beacon in the very centre of the book, all the first half leading up to it, and all the remainder serving to reflect its light.

A HOLY WAR.

Those instances should be enough to show you, Sir, that we are not inventing the difficulties; you cannot read the book attentively without being troubled by them: but to find their solution, you have only to read the book more attentively still. In the case of the wife you would realise perhaps on a third reading, that what she is in revolt against is not the Machiavellianism of her husband, not his cynical mistrust or cruel deception of her, for the "marital politics" are only developed gradually, as a means of defence: marriage begins with mutual vows, in imitation of the ideal or spontaneous union, and it is this imitation that the disillusioned wife is in revolt against; she is wooing the husband to a recovery of spontaneous love, as he before was wooing her to the illusion of vows. But how can this woman be said to be wooing her husband, when all her manoeuvring is

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directed to the acceptance of adulterous lovers? The answer is that her objective is not lovers but love, free and spontaneous as it no longer is in her husband, but may be again if he will make the effort to study her realistically; and this she is forcing him to do by her apparent infidelity, in which quite possibly she herself is unaware of her purpose, and would enter with another into the very illusion she is striving to escape. But there is no doubt as to her purpose, for as Balzac tells us, when her intrigues are successful the affair is always short-lived; which means that the lover in turn becomes a husband, bound by the past instead of being inspired by the present, and the same revolt arises in the heart of the woman.

In thus making war on her husband and on all that species of man, by throwing open to perpetual competition the prize of her person, the wife is exposing her man (whether husband or lover) to a like competition of desires within herself; for there is in every man a love which grips him in spite of himself, a painful love of the difficult woman for her own sake, resulting from the effort she now calls on him to make, while opposed to it there is a love which seeks escape from that pain, in binding itself to the attraction of yesterday: this protection of love from itself is what the wife is in revolt against, for with all its appearance of honesty it makes of her a harlot, and so when she becomes a harlot in appearance she is really asserting her virtue. The effort she demands of her husband is simply to throw open his heart, to endure the pain of loving an object that has no visible attractiveness, but in spite of himself attracts him through the faculty of memory: of this effort only can spontaneous love be born, the illusion of vows necessarily resulting from the easy and pleasant love, which always has a reason in visible attractiveness; wherefore the couple only combine to become rational and independent persons, and there follows that inevitable disillusion, which drives the wife to seek in war her ideal of a true identity.

There is no element of co-operation in Balzac's "marital politics," no conspiracy to avoid the pain of competing loves, no mutual confidence or rational appeal; the husband endures the liberty to which the wife has delivered him, and the possessor in spite of himself becomes the possessed, his circumventing of her treachery becoming imperceptibly an amorous embrace: for

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the more Machiavellian he is the more he exposes himself to love,—see how the great Niccolo himself hauled down his flag in the last chapter of *The Prince*!—it is only sentimentality that locks up the heart, and provokes the righteous fury of woman. It is hardly too much to say, that what a woman demands of her husband is complete infidelity, for on no other condition can his love for her be spontaneous: but observe that a husband who forms alliances with other women is only half unfaithful, he has not attained to that fine dryness of heart, in which he will instantaneously divorce from any woman in admiring her; his heart is not a perpetual battle-ground of opposite loves, which means that it is not open to all women but only to some, and therefore he is not in a state to give progressive love to his wife, who tomorrow may show herself such a woman as he excludes. But surely Balzac's husband is faithful, if ever a man was? Never a man less so! for it is another woman he loves every day, in anticipating his wife's progress through corruption, which he could not do were he clinging sentimentally to his idea of her at marriage, still only knowing her as a thing in being, an object of sense rather than of memory.

If we do not see him forming alliances with other women, it is not because his heart is closed to them but because it is so open, that they displace one another as fast as do the successive phases of his wife's development: probably there are one or two whom he prefers among other women, but the interaction between these several loves is so rapid, that it is most truly presented as a single love for his wife, the fact that it is competitive being necessarily implied in its spontaneous character. Such is the infidelity that woman desires, and it is the sternest rule that a man can lay on himself, since the heart is only kept open by patient study of objects; poets as different as William Morris and Dr. Johnson both insisted, that inspiration never comes to those who lounge about waiting for it, but is the reward of determined application to unpleasant work, which means an opening of the heart to attractions not visible, repudiation of duty in order to exceed it; this was the governing principle of Balzac's own life, and of all the directions he gives to the husband in this book. The negative character of the vow becomes gradually positive, as the husband is forced to study closely the particular woman, whom

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he only took on a blind impulse toward her sex: he finds in the course of her development not one woman but a hundred, and so recovers the right of free choice he had foregone; new fields of experience are opened to him, and the novelty of the other woman is no longer an attraction, since she only has a stale experience to offer.

Early in the book the question is raised, can a man love the same woman always: the answer of the Monster comes as a bellow from the depths of the earth, and all the mountains echo back the one word, YES! As well ask, he cries scornfully, can a musician play a whole piece on the same fiddle! marriage is a work of art, and woman the most responsive of all instruments. But as this discovery only follows on a study of the wife, why does the husband make the effort in the first place, why does he not let the wanton go to the devil, saying to himself that evidently he has married the wrong woman? It can only be that his memory of her begins to work, as soon as she starts to break away, and the fact of her being in his memory constitutes her the right woman, whatever she may do or become: Balzac gives no explanation of this, but it is very noticeable that the husband he describes, while prepared to believe the very worst possible of his wife, never doubts for a moment that she is the right woman.

The natural infidelity of the creature is to be combated by any and every means, many of the stratagems recommended being so inhuman as to be simply farcical, especially the "conjugal hygienics" for the tempering of her blood; indeed we get an impression of the wife as less responsible even than an animal, we feel her as a liquid that will leak out by the mere force of gravity, unless every chink in the barrel be stopped; but if much of this doctrine is to be taken with a grain of salt, as the author plainly hints, the general idea of the husband's sole responsibility, and of the wife as reflecting the degree of his love, which in the stage of disillusion can only express itself in persevering study of the object,—this paradox idea of love as distasteful effort could not be more poetically presented, than it is in this husband's grotesque but mythically true campaign. Does he try to dupe his wife into slavery? but it is an illusion of liberty he deprives her of, in which she was only loved so long as she was "good and nice," in which the bird instead of being caged was let out on a limed tree; now

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that he combats her by cunning strategy, he is loving her with all her natural impulses, is imposing on her no standard but her own. So it seems that for a wife there is only a choice of two kinds of slavery! We would rather put it this way, that liberty for either man or woman lies in slavery: this husband himself becomes a slave to love, while making the wife a slave to his strategy; and then it transpires that it was not his strategy that enslaved her, but the dawning love in him to which she could not but respond. On that day he will have earned the right to trust her, nor will his trust be any imposition on her, any illusion of liberty provoking her to revolt: what right has he at first to trust her, a woman he has never taken the trouble to know? It is true that in the early stages of love, when the desire to choose has found satisfaction in an object, there is a free impulse in both to restrain impulse by vows: but love does not cease to be progressive with this progress, it wants to know (as a step to enjoying) the object to which it has bound itself, and that husband is no lover who does not accept his wife's challenge to war.

THE SENTIMENTALISTS.

Comparing this household with that of our friends Mr. and Mrs. Brown, for example, whose petty bickering, alternating with sentimental clinging, is often so embarrassing to visitors, we notice immediately that with Balzac we are in a very different, a much drier and more bracing atmosphere: there is neither clinging nor bickering, there is divorce from both at once, and so in the war there is not that feeling of helplessness, of one side having to say bang because the other has said bing; there is *design* in all that the husband does, he has attained to a position of free-will in regard to his wife, a position unknown to the drifting sentimentalist. For example, you will hear Mr. Brown say to his wife in querulous tones, "It's no good my taking you to the theatre, you aren't a bit better tempered the next day;" which may be a perfectly just complaint, but is it likely to attain its purpose? Balzac's hero will never lose sight of his purpose, will endure any injustice for the sake of it: what Mr. Brown says to his wife, this wicked Machiavellian and true lover will say to *himself*, and will proceed quietly to act on it; instead of taking his wife to the theatre any more, where she probably sees some admirer to make her dis-

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contented at home, he will re-furnish the drawing-room for her, or at least give her the money for a new set of chintzes, which will keep her at home and in a good temper for weeks . . . Your pardon, Madam, it is Balzac who says so!

Now, are this husband's secrecy and deception so ugly? considered as an alternative to the querulous arguing of Mr. Brown, with its illusion of mutual love and trust, when there is not even mutual curiosity, the "marital politics" have a fine feeling of architecture in them, yes! and it is love's temple that is being built. The alternative to this war is protected lust, licentiousness hiding behind the marriage-license: such is the meaning of Mr. Brown's sentimentality, it is only a "fiddling of harmonics on the sensual," to quote Diana Warwick's phrase; and not being earned in the chaste conditions of war, sensuality ceases to be a pleasure, which only as a pleasure is virtuous. But what is the precise difference between the love of Mr. Brown, who will not divorce from his wife so far as to attain free-will, and the love of Balzac's designing warrior, who seems to look over the head of his wife at something beyond? It is just this, that while our hero watches his wife's desire, which means the direction of her development, and develops a love for her in so doing, Mr. Brown still looks at the result of his wife's past development, meaning her beauty or other ready-made qualifications, and pretends a love for it which now has naturally failed, according as we have already described. In other words, Mrs. Brown is to her husband still an object of sense, while the wife in this book is to her husband—ah! by what faculty is a person's future development perceived? Intuition? bah! philosopher's jargon! who knows what intuition is? that answers no questions, it is only as much as to say, "Let us call it intuition, till we find out what it is; in the mean time, as it is an imposing word, perhaps they'll think we know!"—a plan which seems to have worked very well. Come now! it must be a word at least as common as marriage, if we are to believe that marriage depends on it. Ah, thank you, Reader! memory is the word, the wife in this book is to her husband an object of memory; and that is what distinguishes his love from the sentimentality of Mr. Brown, who clings to a dead form of love in still knowing his wife only as an object of sense.

Now do not suppose that your husband, Madam, in loving

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you as an object of memory will be making of you "a thing of the past;" on the contrary he will be endowing you at thirty-five with a degree of youth, such as you never had in his eyes at twenty, when as an object of sense you presented to him the perfection of your beauty, and he rejoiced in the finality of your development, saw you truly as "a thing of the past." But what is there for a woman to develop into at thirty-five, is it not the destiny (and the desire) of her sex to be valued only for beauty? Granted, but beauty may be either realised as at twenty or potential as in infancy, and it is that potentiality which is recognised in the corruption of age, as a single progressive force throughout; thus we never hesitate to call beautiful those pictures, in which an artist like Rembrandt gives his vision of age or ugliness, for they show us beauty's very cause and origin. To memory the object appears as a process rather than a finality, for the artist or husband is reminded by its imperfection of his own development and decline, is reminded instantaneously of himself as a progressive desire throughout, and rejoices to find the same desire in the object before him; he sees a wife's progress and his own as converging lines, daily approaching that identity of desire, which his body (if not his mind) remembers as their common origin: this is the potentiality of woman in her decline, it is this which even in her perfection poets see,—why else did the Greeks make Memory the mother of the Muses? Let us not be accused of forcing on memory a special meaning, for that would be worse than the hocus-pocus of the intuitionists: if we claim for memory a perception of the future, we only claim for the future a return to origins, or the extreme past as revealed by memory in its purity.

But though memory may thus operate even in the case of a stranger, it is greatly stimulated by the familiarity of its object, for when you are remembering you are more likely to be reminded: the artist is most an artist in his own country, when travelling abroad he becomes more of a photographer, more inclined to choose out the "pretty bits," for the movement of his being is outward to the new and perfect, his sense rather than his memory is stimulated. Thus Stendhal, whose theme is the extensive love of sense, always insists on beauty (*le beau*) as its object, and in his discourse conducts us through the countries of Europe; while it is through the rooms of a house that Balzac conducts us, his

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theme being the intensive love of memory, whose object he declares to be happiness (*le bonheur*), or enjoyment of the familiar in all its imperfection. But if the love described by Stendhal is always turned outwards, how is it that the lover in this case has to search his heart, as we said earlier in speaking of the choice to be made; surely this is the love in which the object is studied, and we were wrong in giving that character to the love described by Balzac? A good point, Sir, and it is very important that it be cleared up: the lover before marriage looks outward to the object of sense, but to all objects rather than to any particular one, for what he is studying is the reflexion of his ideal, that is to say, he is searching his heart in looking where alone he can know it; Balzac's husband on the contrary is truly studying the object, in looking inwards where alone he can know it, and where it is particularised not by his choice but by its own being.

This is the method of the artist and the analogy should make it clear, that the love of memory does not mean sentimental recollections of old times, which certainly would not make for spontaneity in the present, but on the contrary for renewal of vows: however paradoxical it may sound we must insist, that memory gives present perception of a future good, and so is the means by which the husband's motive is picked out of the future, and he exerts himself to study a woman in whom he has no present enjoyment. The promise will not be fulfilled if he merely sits down and waits, there is a perfection to be broken down in him as well as in the woman, and what time does for her he must do by conscious effort: while woman is attaining to beauty man is attaining to reason, which is a submission of the individual to universal humanity, and from that must become a submission to a particular person, if liberty of the individual impulse is to be recovered; for love reveals other as very self, and so the husband becomes free to enter into *le bonheur*, as he would not be if reason held back from the sacrifice, in sluggish disregard of the promptings of memory. The wife by her revolt makes a definite appeal to his memory, in that she forces him to study the course of her desire instead of requiring that she shall answer to his, the right attitude before marriage when there is a choice to be made: note how the sentimental Mr. Brown continues in this attitude, like an artist complaining to his sitter for not being like the portrait;

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whereas Balzac's designing husband takes the blame to himself, and secretly works away at his realistic study.

WHAT IS MODESTY?

We have said that though Balzac does not give the idea of memory in plain statement, the whole book is dominated by the idea, whose ore (if not the metal itself) is very evident in the mass: perhaps it will be enough if we quote three examples, one from the beginning, one from the end and one from the middle. In his crazy Introduction the Monster says—or rather, the word bursts out of him, disconnected and formless as all his utterances are—that the nucleus of his accumulated ideas on marriage was a jest he heard by chance: someone said of a certain couple, that they had fallen in love after twenty-seven years of marriage! Balzac was incapable of reasoning so far as to add, that he realised then the basis of marriage in nature, namely that love may be kindled by an object seen in the memory, just as it is kindled by an object presented to the senses: yet this idea of memory must be what is implied, otherwise there is no point in the “after twenty-seven years.” At the end of the book the author says, that if he had to sum its doctrine up in a sentence (which very wisely he is unwilling to attempt), he would quote the saying of Napoleon, that he would not wish a man a wife unless he were *wakeful*: which may be taken as a jocular allusion to the need for guarding against lovers, and as such the Monster was content to throw it out; but he knew very well in his bones that there was a deeper meaning in it, giving the nature of the love that is implied in the jealousy. To be wakeful is to be conscious of one's self, not merely to pursue an object on the blind impulse of sexual love, which is only a degree less unconscious than the act of growing, but to pause and look inward at the impression made by that object, to check the vision of sense by the vision of memory: only then is a man fully awake, for only then is he fully conscious both of the object and of himself; and it is clear that this is a necessary condition, either to his realising happiness in marriage, or to his being jealous successfully. It may well be that neither Balzac nor Bonaparte had the idea of memory in mind, but we cannot leave two

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such great men talking trivialities, as they would be without the implication of that idea in the word awake.

In the body of this work there is a very curious chapter on Modesty, which illustrates better than any other the profound rightness of the Monster's feeling, together with his total inability to reason: we must consider this example a little more at length, for not only is the modesty of woman insisted on throughout the book, along with her tendency to adultery, but we shall find that modesty is in fact only another name for memory. This quality has proved very baffling to the philosophers, who see pride and humility playing in and out of it, and cannot decide on its essential character: generally they become spiteful over their failure, and declare that modesty is insincere from beginning to end, a matter of convention or affectation, in short that the quality does not exist. Well, if women sometimes laugh at us . . . But hush! that cannot be allowed. Balzac quotes some of the shallow ingenuities of the filosofos, and gives a snort: very good! But in attempting to refute them he wallows in a horrible confusion of pseudo-religion and pseudo-science: then suddenly there is a flash of light, a word comes direct from the infallible instinct of the Monster, a word bearing no relation whatever to the mire of false reasoning, which he fondly believed to be an edifice on which it rested! The fallacy of Rousseau, he announces, was to seek an explanation of modesty in the relations of one person to another, instead of seeking it in the relations of one person to himself or herself: that is the bare idea, which Balzac only amplifies so far as to add, still with profound truth, that modesty is the body's consciousness of itself; the idea is incapable of analysis and must be understood instinctively, he says, evidently scared by the luminous product of his own bodily ferment!

Come, let us dabble our fingers in this flame! The matter of the body is mind in the state of death, liberating by its decay the original forces of growth, which enter the still living mind as spontaneous love; and the body's demand for this in another is modesty, which may therefore be defined as the body's memory of its own origin. The love of courtship, as we said at the beginning, embraces only the form or outline of a person, meaning all the perfection apparent to sense, it is the love of marriage that embraces the matter or inmost substance, the disintegrating mass whence

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springs the ray of self: here is the seat of memory, only perceptible to the lover by his own memory; thus modesty is a demand to be loved not as other but as self, by neglect of the differentiating form of sex, and recognition of the body's matter as common to both. This means of course a progressive love, for matter is always in revolt against its fixation by form, which is only vital as an expression of that revolt, the great example being the vitalisation of marriage by perpetual divorce: and so we have in the body's memory of its origin the motive for the wife's revolt, as well as for the husband's pursuit of her repulsiveness. When the blush of modesty suffuses your cheek, Madam, are we not correct in saying, that what you see in the audacious one is not desire, but its fixation in a dead form or habit; that your memory looks for progressiveness and is distressed by its absence, that you only see an actor trying to impose on you, and so the red flag of revolution is run up to the mast-head?

Desire in any of its forms may have the character of progressiveness, provided there be within it an instantaneous succession of forms, the same lively self-contradiction as is felt throughout this book, or in religious statements like the dogma of the Trinity: a woman's modesty will not be offended at being loved as an object of sense, when she feels herself loved at the same time as an object of memory, that is to say, when she is loved for her personality as well as for her sex; modesty requires that Stendhal shall be always corrected by Balzac, and what is just as important, that Balzac shall be always corrected by Stendhal, for progress is equally arrested when progressiveness itself becomes a fixed idea. Thus there is a blush of acceptance as well as of refusal, a revolt in the woman against the fixation of her own chastity, when she discerns progressiveness in the desire of the man; it is an expression of modesty that should be held very sacred, for the passion is sacrificing its proper form in order to be faithful to the idea: this is a great snare both to husbands and to philosophers, who are led by appearances to think that modesty has failed. Partially it may fail through the enslavement of habit, just as man through habit becomes an offender against modesty: but as Balzac most earnestly warns the husband, no woman (whatever life she may lead) ever entirely loses her modesty, not even the wife in the marriage bed; the desire for progressive love

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will be lurking in her body, unknown perhaps even to herself, and if another man come offering that frankincense, not only will her memory be quick to recognise it, but her modesty will demand that she commit adultery.

THE STAGES OF LOVE.

Balzac distinguishes four stages of love, or to be more precise, he names four stages, for he is not very successful in distinguishing them: let us try to sharpen the outlines a little, that the plot of the story may be clearer; for it consists simply in the passage of husband and wife through these stages. Balzac seems to suggest that the period of each stage is ideally nine years, for it was after twenty-seven years that the couple (who were the nucleus of his thought) fell in love, that is to say, entered the fourth stage distinguished as *le bonheur*; also he supposes marriage to begin about the age of twenty-one, and insists on the age of thirty as an important turning-point, indeed he was the creator of the *femme de trente ans*; also he says that the war of the next period may be expected to end near the age of forty,—but note that as that period is thus made the penultimate or third, the first nine years must come previous to marriage. Dante likewise noticed that nine years was a significant period in his relationship with Beatrice: by the way, we cannot say whether the critics have pointed it out, but the Human Comedy of Balzac and the Divine of Dante are identical in feeling, and nowhere is the identity more striking than in this particular book; for the four stages of love, through which we are now to follow Balzac, are no others than those through which Dante leads us, beginning with his wanderings in the upper world.

Balzac calls the first stage the Honeymoon, explaining however that it may be protracted for years, according to the "talent" of the husband: but he never seriously considers that as happening, and practically makes his marriage begin with the second stage; indeed he is frankly uninterested in the Honeymoon, and in one place cries impatiently that there is no such thing in the true marriage. The fact is, the honeymoon is no more than a farewell to the love which precedes marriage; it is a relic from the period of courtship, when the sexual impulse is still unrestrained by vows. and it is virtue to follow pleasure because a choice has to

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be made: in Stendhal we have the poetry of the honeymoon, but he would revolt as Balzac from the month of guzzled pleasure, with which husbands begin by insulting the modesty of their wives, and as it were slam the gates of Hell on themselves. The first stage of love then is from the age of twelve to the age of twenty-one, or roughly from arrival at puberty to arrival at reason, the period of easy flitting from flower to flower: we shall call it the stage of Courtship because it is a search for the one woman, who shall answer to the ideal of the lover, and whom he thinks to have found in many women successively; thus love at this stage is essentially polygamous, so much so that it will hardly settle on an object for one sweet month, its very sexuality giving it the character of chastity.

Balzac's story (like Dante's) begins with the entrance into the second or rational stage, in which love's impulse is to bind itself by the taking of vows, and the spacious pleasures of the world are left behind: this (as following the Honeymoon) he calls the stage of Disillusion—it is true he generally refers to it more vaguely as "the crisis at which the marriage has now arrived," but the occasion of the crisis is always the wife's disillusion—a condition of mind for which he blames at one time the blunders of the husband, at another current morals and especially the method of educating women; which indeed may aggravate the condition, but as we have already pointed out, the taking of vows is itself an illusion of love, and in any world under any laws disillusion must follow. However, both the vow and its consequence are good in turn, for spontaneous love would deny itself in being itself continuously, wherefore it must pass through a negative phase just as God had to become Man, in order to be born afresh of mortal suffering; and so it comes about that if the vow means the locking up of free impulse for a period, and is therefore Hell for what in Dante's time was called the soul, it is Heaven or joyous liberty for the reason or disciplinary force: to see this stage in its positive aspect, we must look not to Dante or to Balzac, but to the chivalrous loves of the Morte d'Arthur, in which the joy of dutiful service lights up the night of suppressed impulse like a moon. Both Dante and Balzac, like all Europe for the last eight centuries, were mainly interested in struggling out of that stage: they were inspired by the Protestant idea of divorce, as a means

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to recovering a marriage based on spontaneous impulse; and divorce for that purpose is the meaning of the war in this book.

Balzac indeed was so eager to come to the stage of War, that most of its signs are anticipated in his description of the Illusion, called prematurely by him the Disillusion, and so when he arrives at the great third stage he is unable clearly to distinguish it; the fact is, the whole book is written in the key of the War, just as Dante's Comedy was wholly written in the key of Purgatory: it is only this third stage that either of them presents in its positive aspect. But as the scene of all Balzac's progress is the upper world, as a result of the inversion of ideas in the sixteenth century, unfortunately too large a subject to enter on here, he gives us Dante's vision as it might have been presented by Molière; the efforts that he insists on go to such a merry tune, that we feel them rather as a pleasant relief of pressure, a spending rather than an earning of reward. This is the stage for which our friend Mr. Brown lacks heart, petty bickering is so much easier (even if more miserable) than divorce for the greater war, that which the artist wages with the object he has to represent: so Mr. Brown tries vainly to preserve the romance of the Morte d'Arthur, after the impulse to restrain impulse has failed; he is still making querulous appeals to his wife's reason, or goodness in the New-Testament sense, when the goodness of Abraham or of the Second Advent is what she is aspiring to. How well does our Monster show, that it is from the wife the initiative after marriage comes, and that the virtue of the husband consists in alert anticipation of her desire, as opposed to the study of his own which was virtue before marriage!

Now why does the woman take the initiative in this third stage of love? we have already spoken of her modesty, as a general revolt against habit or fixed desire, but in this stage there is a more particular reason; remember, we are now dealing with the woman from the age of thirty to thirty-nine, when she is most keenly aware of time being against her. In this or any other world the male represents the creative power, and the female its triumph in the perfection of the creature; if you like, Madam, the male is the caterpillar, or potentiality with time on its side, and the female the butterfly, or beauty with time against it: so it comes about quite naturally, that the ambition of the female is to win over time to her side, which means being loved for what she may

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become in the future, instead of living on her capital, the essential immorality of the harlot. But does not a man in taking the vow of marriage give that love, that very insurance-policy she wants, and is not this why women are so eager (as 'tis reputed) to enter into vows? No, Sir! at the age of twenty-one, when we are supposing the vows to be taken, a woman feels secure in her beauty, the threat of time is too remote to trouble her, she is only eager for the fixation of love, because she feels that what is loved in her is fixed, its final perfection having been reached; this is the idea of the Morte d'Arthur, in which all the women are eternally beautiful. At the age of thirty when a woman feels a warning within her, that the process of development does not cease with perfection, she revolts against the vow she desired nine years ago; she begins to woo her husband to a free and progressive love, one that shall rejoice, shall create values in whatever she may become: and her chief method, as indicated by Balzac, is to make herself as hateful to her husband as possible,—which is strictly logical.

If the woman who has come to thirty unmarried seems to be only the more eager for vows, that is because love cannot skip a stage, a man cannot love the woman he does not want until she is definitely the woman he has; for if choice were still open he would simply turn away to another, would still pursue the object attractive to sense, instead of his memory awaking to attraction in decay. A man must pass through a period of imitation before he can be an original artist, and the extensive love (*amour Stendhalien*) of the first stage must submit to the discipline of a vow, before it can become the intensive love (*amour Balzacien*) of the third: but in such late marriages the relation of Lancelot and Guinevere—we leave something to your imagination here, Reader—very shortly becomes that of the couple in this book. In other places enough has been said of the potentiality, discerned by memory in the crumbling of beauty,—with which crumbles also loyalty or the rational fixation of love, since the vow was based on a seeming finality of development,—it is now time to examine more closely the promised identity of desire, which is attained to in *le bonheur* of the fourth stage: during the war (as we have said) the initiative is with the woman, she woos the man by making herself hateful and he responds by patient study;

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the result is that the initiative imperceptibly returns to the man, who develops for the woman a positive or creative love, to which she responds inevitably by merely being what she is.

WHAT IS HAPPINESS ?

To avoid all possibility of confusion with the stage of vows, in which the response to love takes the form of conscious loyalty, let us return to the analogy of the artist: from responding patiently himself to distasteful realities, he develops a vision to which he finds all reality responding, and it is in this way that a woman at last responds to the persevering love of her husband. But inasmuch as we are human and therefore always conscious, the pure idea of this response can no more be realised than Euclid's line, it can only enter into reality as a qualifying principle; there will be a base of conscious loyalty in the fourth stage, but it will only reflect the woman's consciousness of the fact, that whatever she do she will be responding to the husband's love, as nature in all its aspects responds to the vision of the artist. Only in this sense, Madam, do we claim that it is possible for man to develop an irresistible love, one that shall command the love, not only of his wife but of all women in the world. What precisely is it the artist sees in that landscape, to which the photographer would scorn to expose a plate? is it the crops which might be grown on it if scientifically manured, is it the gold which may await the miner beneath it? Bah! a mere farm? a mere mine? it is the empire of the whole world, which shall be his if he can appreciate this most worthless of its parts; for then his patient studies will have their reward in a power of vision, creating beauty without effort wherever he may turn, and giving him such enjoyment of the world as no emperor ever had, only possession being vested in a crown. And so if the husband persevere with this treacherous and odious woman, he shall at last find her lovely, and in that instant shall command the love of all women in the world: for as he no longer loves her for her differences, all that edifice of beauty now tottering to its fall, he loves her for what is identical in all women as well as in himself, and they no more than she can resist this love.

But there must no longer be any possessiveness in it; that makes impossible the love of more than one, since another cannot

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be taken without the one being left: love must have progressed through war to pure enjoyment, in which memory so dominates sense, that in the beauty of others it is still the wife who is seen. That is the mathematics of the case, perhaps it will be best envisaged if we say, that love in this fourth stage is the same as it was before the couple ever met; yes! for if the man had not loved his wife before he knew her, how would he have recognised her at their first (or any) meeting? She was all that delighted him in things and people, when as a child he gradually opened his eyes to the world: thus marriages are made in Heaven, and to this Heaven love returns in its fourth stage, when it becomes again free and spontaneous. Balzac is very vague about the nature of *le bonheur*, indeed he is not much more interested in it than in the stages of Courtship and Vows; he is content to affirm throughout the book, that happiness is to be attained through the persevering love of the third stage: his heart is in the struggles of Purgatory!

When the story actually brings him to the gate of Paradise, the antics of the Monster are very curious: incapable of thought, he plunges haphazard into a description; we are introduced to a couple who have found peace in the extremest cynicism, the husband explaining that all the trouble arises out of the superstition, that there is or ever has been such a force as love! But the author realises that this will hardly do as an idea of *le bonheur*, so he makes the husband proceed to give a rapturous account of the ascetic life, and the joys of solitary cultivation of the soul: but against this the Frenchman in Balzac revolts, the husband is hissed off the stage and—the subject is quietly dropped! However, the remaining chapter is highly significant: Balzac feels the need to get back to France at all costs, and the gusto for life and fellowship; so under the pretext of justifying the gallantries of wives, and especially the reckless expenditure into which their lovers are led, he indulges in a farcical discourse on the economic value of consumption. We commend it to students of the “new economics,” for with the exception of Mandeville’s Fable of the Bees, it is probably the earliest attempt to formulate the idea, that wealth is created by the appreciation of unrecognised values . . . Here! what’s this? is it not the very idea of the artist, and of the husband, the true idea of *le bonheur*? Oh, the infallible

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Monster! As soon as he left trying to reason about the question, and became frankly monstrous, he sent an arrow straight to the mark!

But where shall we find a book devoted primarily to the fourth stage, as this of Balzac's is to the third, as the *Morte d'Arthur* is to the second, and as Stendhal's work is to the first? It will have to be at the opposite pole to the *Morte d'Arthur*, the other two being the downward and upward transitions: clearly it is the *Arabian Nights*; there we have the idea of power and light, the vision of the child or super-artist, the vision that can transform a hag into a princess, a gazelle or what it will. And in the harem we have a relic of love's power to command love: a mere dead relic it was even in those days, such as our monarchy to-day is of political power, but it serves as an image . . . God bless us! so is this the ideal of marriage, was it for this the wife in her modesty was striving, to be locked up with fifty others in the harem of some old Turk? We are only interpreting Balzac, Madam, and there is no denying that his "marital politics" have an Oriental flavour! However, be assured: the original harem had no locks on door or gate, the wife or wives chose to avail themselves of its hospitality, being enslaved solely by the power of love; and that slavery is what every Western wife is striving for to-day. The political revolt of women likewise is not against the supremacy of the male, but against the illusive liberty they have in the supremacy of their own sex, in which (as they say) they are put on a pedestal by men, only to prevent them from asserting their natural selves: it is made to appear that they set a standard for men, but being primarily the chosen they only retain this position by conforming to men's ideal, therefore they would force men to recover the superior position of choosers, which means learning to choose women for what they naturally are; and as this means for men a Purgatorial effort, they prefer to bare their heads before women and give them the right of way, a dead form against which the modesty of women is gradually revolting.

The lord of the harem, having won his position by courage and endurance in the war described by Balzac, commanded love as the general of an army commands service, by the right of having himself given the greatest service; or as the head of the Church

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commands obedience, by being himself the slave of the slaves of God. When the harem was a vital form, it was never noticed that there was a harem; and so it is with every expression of power: did not the prophet Samuel warn the Jews, that kingship would be dead when they had kings? The spontaneous monarchy of the Judges, unsupported by force or law, is the condition that marriage is always aiming at: but it is only possible when the love of the husband has become an irresistible power, by meeting dauntlessly every challenge to its endurance. Imperceptibly the revolt of the wife becomes a joyous response, till at last there is identity of desire between the two, as foreseen by the faculty of memory; then jealousy is no longer possible, or only in the inverted form of Shaw's charming comedy, *How he Lied to her Husband*. This means that true love is never unrequited, and we make no apology for the assertion: when the contrary appears to be the case, you may be sure that there is some taint of fixedness in the love, trying to fix the woman to some standard not her own, instead of welcoming whatever may come out of her.

But what becomes of the marriage, if the husband is able to command the love of all women, and duly proceeds to form a harem? his wife, you think, will be inclined to lock the doors on the *inside*, if he himself does not lock them on the *outside*! Or perhaps she commands the love of all *men*, and will have a harem of her own in the next house? We beg your pardon, Madam, but she had that in the *Morte d'Arthur*; that is to say, she had it in the second stage of her own marriage, when she bound herself by vows to withhold her beauty from the multitude of men, and as the object of their desire became a queen: in no other way can woman have a harem, for it is only as the chosen that she can be the chooser, and so she most asserts the sovereignty of her will in suppressing it,—wherefore we see her in our time trying to throw away sovereignty. Note that man throws it away in *exercising* his right of choice, and so his power in the fourth stage only lasts so long as he loves *all*: his harem must be the whole world, as it was in infancy before he entered the period of courtship, and limited his right of choice by loving *some*, finally to lose it altogether in loving *one*: only when he loves that one so intensely as to lose sight of her being or fixity, when he loves her as a potentiality and so loves *none*, does he recover the sovereign

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right of choice, and again as a child love all. Fear not, friends the moralists; the man who thus opens his heart lies on no bed of roses, of which you have sufficient proof in his rarity. Many a husband will possess another woman secretly, but in doing so dare not still love his wife; likewise many a husband will remain faithful to his wife, but in doing so dare not still love the other woman: thus in neither case is his love spontaneous, since it is protected from the pain of competition, and so degenerates into an unfiery possessiveness, insulting alike to wife or mistress.

It is a necessity of marriage that the heart be kept open to the other woman, for a man cannot love the woman he has and does not want, unless he also love the woman he wants and cannot have: each of these loves is necessarily painful, but from the two pains is struck out the spark of pure happiness; and only when a man has won this happiness for himself can he give it to any woman. There is a tradition in England that a gentleman in these circumstances goes to shoot big game, lions being easier to face than competing loves; while the man who cannot afford an expedition to Africa buys arsenic weed-killer, or worse still, goes about *wishing* one of the women dead, murdering now Rachel and now Leah in his heart. Can such a wretch be called a lover? verily, it is only when a man loves all that he loves the very self of any, self being just that which is identical in all, as opposed to the differences of external form: wherefore it is more strictly logical to say that the lord of a harem loves *one*, and that the man who loves all is he who binds himself by a vow, since the apparent one is only loved for her differences, meaning sexual qualities that belong to all rather than to herself. Never was the marriage so much a marriage as in this fourth stage, when the wife can feel that the love given by her husband to any is added to her own, since it is the very inmost substance of woman that he loves, possessing it by enjoyment of that material radiation, which we vaguely call the presence of a person: in this love there is a true mingling of bodies, such as the formal embrace can only imitate, and it is thus that Dante, that poet incomprehensible to us by reason of his pure materialism, loves Beatrice in Heaven, rejoicing to bathe himself for ever in the light of her presence; yes, in the Celestial Rose we have an image of the original harem, the desire

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of all being identified with the desire of their Lord, whose passion on the Cross won him that sovereignty of love.

THE BED OR BEDS.

And yet it is from the land of the harem that we have that cold treatise on sexual pleasure, to which we have already referred as being so remote in feeling from Balzac's work: the Khama-Sutra may be called the negative pole of Eastern love, it gives us possessiveness in its entire subordination, standing to love as the construction of pianos stands to music; it is a useful but purely technical work, on a theme that needed no longer (or not as yet) to be veiled, for sexual pleasure only has sanctity in the stage of vows, being then identified with love itself as in the *Morte d'Arthur*, where it appears as the settling on one woman of that desire, which naturally would always be in pursuit of the other yonder. *Mais le lit est le mariage!* Ah! now we are in a position to examine Balzac's central idea, the dogma of the two beds in one bed: only we must remind you first, that the stages of love here presented successively, and of nine years' duration, aspire always to succeed one another in smaller cycles of increasing frequency, which become instantaneous in love's ideal purity. Balzac distinguishes three forms of cohabitation, firstly the double bed, secondly twin beds or two in one room, and thirdly beds in separate rooms; and then taking each form in turn, gives arguments for and against its adoption.

As usual the arguments are chaotic and often overlap, the distinction between twin beds and the double bed being sometimes quite lost: for while he has nothing but scorn for the system of twin beds, the double bed shares so much of it, that in a certain anecdote he forgets which system he is illustrating. But on the subject of separate rooms he is quite definite, and writes with a most beautiful sensitiveness: that is his ideal form of cohabitation, and to master this form is "the highest achievement of virile intellect." But what precisely has to be mastered, he feels that it would be blasphemy to explain; nor is there any need, he says, for all the faithful will understand . . . Ah! then there is something to be understood, it is not simply a doctrine of monasticism? no, that would have been easy to announce. Nor is it an attempt to reproduce the happy conditions of illicit love, as might seem to

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be suggested in the one hint given, that this is a means to make constancy easy and delightful: for a moment we had visions of the respectable husband letting himself down out of his window by a sheet, and climbing up the rain-pipe to his wife's; or way-laying her at a bend of the stairs, or leaping on her from behind the drawing-room sofa, till the poor woman is carried off to hospital a nervous wreck! No, we are convinced that the separate rooms are a pure symbol, indeed the author hardly considers the system as practical politics: having shyly but with great positiveness announced the idea, he proceeds to consider the politics of the double bed, consigning to utter damnation the heresy of twin beds.

What Balzac failed altogether to see, and this is really rather surprising, is that each of his forms of cohabitation is appropriate to one of his stages of love: the double bed obviously belongs to the honeymoon, though less obviously to the stage of courtship with which we have identified the honeymoon; but remember, the chaste character of that stage is only a product of its pure sexuality, its restless pursuit of the new woman over there, and of this combining tendency the double bed is a true symbol. So in their turn are twin beds of the period of vows that follows, when rationalism or the inverted romance of the *Morte d'Arthur* triumphs over spontaneity, and the two lovers co-exist as independent entities, side by side without fusion of consciousness: the sexual fervour of courtship is then reduced to a matter-of-fact possessiveness, or indulgence in the moderated sexuality of the *Khama-Sutra*; which in realising denies love's ideal of unity, since the real unity (as always) is one among many, the lovers only being joined in their extreme points of difference, instead of in that original identity which knows no other, the marriage of all marriages aspired to by love,—and so the illusion is fitly symbolised in the one alcove with its two beds. Finally, the beds in separate rooms belong to the period of war, when the two are seeking the ideal unity by repudiation of the vow; there is no difficulty about the symbolism here: but what of the fourth stage, how do the couple cohabit when they have attained to *le bonheur*?

The answer may be found by simple arithmetic: we have had one room with one bed, one room with two beds, two rooms with two beds, and there only remains two rooms with one bed . . .

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What ? Oh, think it out for yourself, Sir! how did you sleep with your wife before you ever met her, were you not in the same bed though in separate rooms ? Now we suggest that this is what the infallible one was feeling his way to, a return to the conditions under which the marriage was made in Heaven, only with this difference in the conscious re-birth of spontaneity, that instead of sleeping actually in separate rooms and ideally in one bed, the couple shall now sleep actually in one bed and ideally in separate rooms; for as marriage is essentially a sex relationship, even though in the third stage an opposite love is developed, its form should be the double bed of courtship or the sexual stage, within which its substance or internal ferment will produce instantaneous succession of stages, meaning at the same time the divorce of the couple into separate rooms: courtship thus checked by divorce will never sink into the bondage of vows, and in the words of Balzac, constancy will always be easy and delightful. Oh! the *mariage blanc* of the early Christians ? Tut tut! if that had been all he meant, could not the Monster have said so ? What he is after is something much more difficult, and proportionately more delightful; it is chastity within the fullest indulgence of pleasure, yes the very fullest, for only when desire is studied in its natural progressiveness, unfixed by any habit whether sensual or moral, can it be said to be indulged: and only then does the relationship become chaste, sense being perpetually checked by memory, and memory in its turn by sense. This is the meaning of the dogma of the two beds in one bed; and it is all that is meant by the whole cynical comedy, with its mixture of Machiavelli and the Grand Turk.

THE VIRGIN MOTHER.

There are many more questions arising out of this strange book; but though Balzac advised his husband, with regard to some of the difficulties of sharing a bed, to follow the example of modern authors and make the preface longer than the work, he did not express approval of this in the authors: so we can only touch on a few points more, and that very briefly. It must strike many readers as curious, that in a book on marriage, and especially on its physiology, there is hardly a word as to the children: it would seem that if the physiology of marriage does not mean its

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sexual aspect, it must at least mean its maternal. So it does, Sir, and that is just why there is nothing about children . . . Ah! thank you, Madam; we thought you would understand. It is a matter of simple logic, of which the Monster had plenty in his bones, if none in his head: the object of maternal love is of course the child, but the visible child which the mother holds in her arms is only half a child, inasmuch as it has already added much to itself by growth. To arrive at the pure child, you must go back to its origins within the very substance of its mother's body, back to the origins of her own being, back to the ancestor of the race, back to God himself, the Ancient of Days, ever present as the spontaneous impulse of love: this is the child from which we have all grown, and of which every woman has a memory, giving rise in her to that desire manifesting itself as modesty; and so you see, we have been discussing maternity all the time, while the pure child played around us under the name of *le bonheur*, that mystic incorporation of the parents, begotten by the passion rather than the act of love. As such religion represents to us the Son of Man, telling us that we as real children are born impure, and need to be born again of painful effort; and here you have the idea confirmed in a racy French novel, where surely you thought to escape the Hound of Heaven!

Did you not also learn at your mother's knee, Sir, that the mother of God is a virgin? Ha! you thought you had learnt better since, in accepting the vulgar illusion, that maternity depends on the co-operation of the male? On the contrary, a woman is a mother only in so far as she is a virgin; nor does any woman ever entirely lose her virginity, though she may compromise it from time to time, may moderate her maternal passion for the pure child, in order to become sexually the mother of the real or half-child. This the Church declares to be the purpose of marriage, and certainly it is the purpose of that second stage, the taking of vows, with which the Church is mainly concerned: but Balzac is concerned with the third stage, in which the maternal passion asserts itself in purity; hence the separative love symbolised in the separate rooms, hence the divorce initiated by the wife's revolt. Even in real maternity the separative character of love is evident, for it consists in the mother's ejection of the male within her, wherefore she is still more mother when she refuses to combine

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with the external male; and it is then that he sees her pregnant with her original self, the pure child from which both he and she grew, sees it as plain as if she held it in her arms: but if this child is to be brought to birth, he must love her as her maternal modesty demands.

The book of real parentage is the *Morte d'Arthur*, with its defence of the weak and its devotion to the idea of continuity: but where are the children, and where the childishness in that grave book? surely the *Arabian Nights* . . . Yes! if it is the child in its strength you are looking for, the joyous and irresistible impulse of growth, the original creative power itself, the vision of the super-artist or love of the husband in the fourth stage: but if it is the child as a creature, personal and conscious, weak and human, you will find it in the knights and ladies of chivalry; they are themselves the children of the Homeric heroes, a second generation in whom the virtue of the genius has become the virtue of the gentleman, and spontaneous love is subject to conscious reason. As aforesaid Balzac, starts in this stage, he must do so in order to show the way out of it; that is why he excludes from his survey all but gentlemen and ladies, persons in whom impulse is already thoroughly disciplined, and who will therefore have the impulse to its liberation by effort, persons so far above necessity too, that the strife of love will not be hampered by any other: never was the Monster so right, and never was he so much in the dark as to what he was doing, probably believing himself as purely snobbish as most of his readers have called him!

But what of Balzac's famous realism, of which the characteristic feature was his interest, not in the possession of money but in its making? can we recognise the author of *Eugénie Grandet*, as Balzac was persistently called by his contemporaries, in the excessive gentility of the *Physiology of Marriage*? It is true that his great study of the miser was not written until six years later, and so Balzac might be thought not yet to have found himself in this book: but this happens to be the very book in which he did find himself; he wrote a considerable number before it, but this is the earliest now included in the canon of his work. And it is very definitely by the author of *Eugénie Grandet*, for what could be more economical than the idea of marriage, with its using and using of the same woman, its extraction from

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her of the utmost value, nay its creation of new values by love, its very coining of money? is it not an idea to delight the heart of the old vintner? And the virtues that are insisted on in Grandet, his patient concentration on a single aim, the alliance of cunning with discipline, of a high ambition with the study of realities, are they not the identical virtues required of the husband in this book? It is to Stendhal we must go for the opposite virtues, graceful pursuit of pleasure, generous expenditure and so on. This might seem to account for the lack of tender sympathy, which distresses some readers in this marriage: but surely Grandet was sympathetic enough to his wines, if not to his daughter; and it is the wines that correspond to the wife, they are what the patriarch husbanded, divining potentiality in the ferment of age. It is remarkable that the same people, who complain of Balzac as teaching a heartless attitude toward the wife, also complain of him as always being on the wife's side! perhaps this is the best answer of all to the charge; it means that the husband, in breaking out of Mr. Brown's sentimentality, to make a realistic and (if you like) cynical study of the object, is only being cynical toward his own ideal of yesterday, and is creating a new one in accordance with his wife's development. How could he enter with her more tenderly into the maternal passion?

MORAL OF THE BOOK.

Break with habit, break all adhesions, break, break, break all the time; or in one word, **DIVORCE**: that is the moral of this physiology, with its passionate devotion to the idea of marriage. Divorce for the sake of another marriage is not enough, the idea must be embraced passionately, and then marriage itself will be revealed as a passion, possessing us in spite of ourselves: that is the Protestant Faith, which Europe as yet is only flirting with. Once more we must insist, that the husband in this book has divorced from his wife as far as is possible: to form another alliance is only a partial divorce, for it means that the heart is not open to all women in the world, the pain of competing loves is still being avoided; thus the appeal of memory is not able to make itself felt, and there is neither motive for the effort which would save marriage, nor happiness in the half-hearted attachment of

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adultery. There is danger of course in such doctrine, but just as nakedness is more decent than half-attire, so the freedom of divorce will be more decent than our present compromise: and as for the plea of the children, far more children have had their minds poisoned by festering marriages, than ever have caught a cold by the break-up of their home; the only way to consider the children is not to consider them at all. Anyhow they will be marrying themselves one day, and we shall be doing them good service if we can purify the temple before they enter it; therefore we hold with Balzac that it is time to consider the ideal child, that flame of love which is the especial child of humanity: away, solemn fears! it is an idea of pure joy that must be pursued in that mood of comedy, never departed from by our wise Monster even in preaching the need of sacrifice.

This book is dedicated to the disciples of Panurge, and it gives the same answer to his famous question, that was given to Panurge by the Oracle of the Bottle: you remember, Reader, how he asked all the wiseacres of Europe in turn, "If I marry shall I be made a cuckold?" and not one could give him an answer; so he went to the ends of the earth to consult the magic bottle, which answered him in one word, "Trinque." Better than the caressing labials of "Buvez," the German word suggests the metaphysical idea of drinking, the disintegration of a fluid in fermenting, which produces the disintegration of the cold continuous reason! and is not this the very idea of divorce, in which the rationalism of the vow is broken up in the ferment of maternal passion, or modesty's demand for progressive love? Note that in *habitual* drunkenness there is no disintegration, but a very coherent mode of life; so our "eclectic philosopher," while addressing himself to the disciples of Panurge, includes in his book a most stirring address, a great "All hail!" to the drinkers of *water*: sobriety and drunkenness, intellectual and sentimental love, effort and pleasure, are for ever to be played off against one another. Only thus will a man be faithful to the progressiveness of his own desire, only thus will he not cuckold himself; and unless he has done that, there is no fear that his wife will cuckold him: thus are reconciled the two theses of the Monster, first that a man's wife is a faithful reflection of himself, second that she is an independent party, who must be watched and mistrusted

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perpetually, study of the object being the only mode of breaking down fixed ideals.

Here also we have an explanation of the term cuckold, with its curious identification of subject and object, the cuckoo and the bird whose nest it lays in: could anything be more irrational? yet it satisfies the infallible feeling of the monstrous world! But why then does Balzac not use it, why does he introduce the image of the Minotaur? we have no hesitation in saying, it was for the very reason that the *contradiction* in the term cuckold has been lost sight of, through the long familiarity of the metaphor. A cuckold has come to be thought of solely as the victim of *another*, as the bird in whose nest the egg is laid, and not at the same time as the bird which lays it: which makes of the wife's infidelity an act of harlotry, instead of (as it was rightly felt to be) an act of modesty. This agrees with Balzac's statement that he dropped the familiar term, with all its ribald associations, out of consideration for the modesty of ladies: but though the Monster could say this much truly, as usual he was in the dark as to what he was really doing: he flounders into a series of jibes at this very modesty, as a pretended superiority to Molière's time, when he is concerned with the decay of a word since then. The idea is restored beautifully in the image of the Minotaur, which represents primarily the species husband, the half-animal sensualist to whom so many virgins are delivered every year, and who is slain by the hero Theseus, made invincible by a divine or progressive love: we have little doubt, that Balzac by his poetic sense made a real discovery in archæology, and that this was the significance of the Cretan legend; you will at least agree, Reader, that the subject of marriage is labyrinthine enough! How else are the *horns* of cuckoldry to be explained? they certainly do not belong to the cuckoo, and are in fact a much older piece of heraldry.

Note that whereas the term cuckold, properly belonging to the adulterer, is applied to the husband, Balzac applies to the adulterer the term Minotaur, properly belonging to the husband: thus he more effectually suggests, that the initiator of the wife's adultery is the husband, as the initiator of the husband's salvation is the wife, appearances in both cases being false; also the husband's character is more truly represented in the lazy sensual brute, who will not divorce from habit and thus grows horns. Towards the

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end of the book, when all possible directions have been given as to how to avoid the catastrophe, there is a discussion as to how a husband should take the blow, which is highly characteristic of the Monster: he begins by saying flatly, that a man who does not separate from his wife for ever is a ninny, or to use a modern colloquialism, a mug; then on the very next page he gives an anecdote of a husband who ignored the affair, and pronounces him a great soul! The author's parting word, before he lays down his pen, is to the effect that if he himself should be a victim, he would only make it the beginning of his marriage: now let us try to reconcile these conflicting views. Separate for ever . . . the beginning of marriage: but is not this the whole idea of the book, that marriage consists in perpetual divorce? Especially this is the idea of the third period, and it is at the end of the second, nine years after the taking of vows, that adultery most commonly occurs; for then the husband has grown horns by the fixation of habit, has minotaurised himself, and so it matters little whether the wife ratifies the fact or not: but you are not to take this, Madam, as an excuse for lazy immodesty, you must help him to shed those adornments, by compelling him to wakefulness and a realistic study of you!

But separate *for ever*? surely there is re-union in the fourth stage? Never, thou weary sentimentalist! *Le bonheur* is only divorce carried a stage *further*, the vows which were only being broken in the third stage have totally vanished in the spontaneity of the fourth: and if after nine years of this there begins a repetition of the cycle, if the couple are brought together by sentimental recollections, corresponding to their sentimental delight in one another's beauty and strength, which in the period of courtship were the past achievements bringing them together, now as then it will be only carrying divorce still further; for their very approaching means that they are beginning to see one another as separate beings, after being identified unconsciously in *le bonheur* as in that period of infancy, wherein neither knew the other except as his or her own delight in the world. Divorce only ceases when the progress from stage to stage is arrested, and that means that the marriage as an organism is dead: only beware, Sir Husband, of going to Madam with this book in your hand, and telling her it is now time to do so-and-so; storm and earthquake

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will be the result—we assume that your wife is a modest woman, Sir—and we decline to be answerable for your fate. The geometric form of the crystal is never realised in nature, and probably there never was a marriage, in which the stages succeeded one another with the symmetry and the distinctness here described: in most marriages the character of some one stage is so predominant, that the succession of others can only be dimly recognised, like the seasons of the year in our British climate; for example, the third stage may take the form of an actual divorce from house and home, it may even so dominate the others that the couple never live together at all, as was practically the case in Balzac's own marriage, on the other hand it may be only perceptible as a certain dryness in their conversation, involving not even a divorce from the common bed.

But what use in book or preface if neither is to be heeded? here is a nice dilemma, the horned beast himself confronting us! if our doctrine is needed it is wrong, since we have declared that sufficient motive is supplied by memory, and if it is true there was no need to write it. Have at you, Minotaur! Memory as the motive for divorce means the break-up of reason, a process that can never be assisted by reason itself, as might seem to be the case were memory prompted by this book; or to put it another way, if this book were an utterance of reason its teaching could only be obedience to vows: therefore it is a case of memory working in the author, and the husband in heeding it will still have only memory as motive. Consider this work as a rotten apple, placed on a shelf of sound ones in the hope to corrupt them, and so to release the seed or spontaneous impulse of growth: the love of memory is just such a decay of independent being, and as a return to common substance is itself common to all, therefore it is the same whether the husband is prompted by his own memory or by our author's; only if it were a doctrine of reason would it not be his own, for reason is essentially the submission of self to all, it is the soundness of the apple by which the seed is locked up. The book is addressed to your memory and through that faculty you shall receive it, which means divorce from reasonable obedience, and watchfulness of the ferment it may set up in your own mind; thus you will be taught by it without being taught: as a physiology it can have no moral

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but a return to nature, in which it shows that marriage has a sure foundation.

A BASIS IN NATURE.

We have avoided the question of an analogy in the animal kingdom, firstly because Balzac himself never touches on it, and secondly because its discussion could not be included in a mere preface: but an analogy of human marriage there must certainly be, not only in the animal but also in the vegetable and mineral kingdoms, since sexual love is balanced by maternal love throughout all nature; and we owe it to the reader to give at least a hint—the limitations of space forbid us to give more—of the form taken by marriage among the animals. The only individuality they have is that of the species, humanity being distinguished by the individuality of the specimen, for animals are humanised in so far as they show such individuality: thus every man constitutes a species in himself, and whereas the animal has many females of his own species, the human male has only one; and the fidelity of the animal to its species, maintained by the force of maternal love or modesty, operating through the pure memory of the body, is a perfect analogy of human marriage. For though species is defined as a group in which any pair of members are capable of breeding, and a man is capable of breeding in the animal sense with any woman, there is only one woman with whom he can produce the true Son of Man, the child of individual consciousness; and when he mates adulterously with any other, it is analogous to the unnatural mating (say) of dog and cat, and shows that his mind is closed to the promises of memory: the only exception to this is a marriage so dominated by the character of the first stage, that the others succeed one another within the polygamy of courtship, and the wife is satisfied that there is progressiveness in the love, she being the only judge of what is and what is not adultery.

On the great subject of one woman for every man we can only likewise give a hint, for its full discussion would involve an inquiry into the history of the soul, both before and after life: we have already said that marriages are made in childhood before the couple meet, the ideal which the lover will take with him into the stage of courtship being then created, as a summary of the

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qualities which first delighted him in things or people; but just why certain qualities delighted this child, is a question that we must reluctantly leave to another occasion,—it would be the main theme of a preface to Stendhal's work. The later aspect of the case is what Balzac is concerned with, when a man has taken a woman as approximating to that ideal, not necessarily the only woman in the world for him, and when the ideal has consequently been modified by his delight in her: then indeed she has become the one woman in the world for him, only the perception of this requires conscious effort on his part, for which the motive is supplied by nature in the way we have shown. But what precisely was the delight he took in this woman, which had the effect of modifying his childhood's ideal? Was she the first to wake in him physical lust, or the first to give him experience of mental intoxication, or the first whose beauty he admired critically, or the first who gave him a desire for paternity, or the first of the other sex for whom he felt intellectual friendship; and was the fact signed and sealed by going with her to the altar, or by going with her to bed and (what Napoleon declared to be the essential) mixing his sweat with hers?

Well, here is the hint and it cannot be more: the delight may be all or any of these, the form of it is not what counts but the time of its occurrence, the point in the development of the person experiencing it; and of this two illustrations may be given, one from the animal kingdom and one from the human. It is only at a certain season of the year that the animal makes love, and being married to its species it accepts the first specimen to cross its path, the delight consisting in its timeliness rather than any other quality; in the same way a man at the marrying age accepts, not the first *woman* to cross his path, but the first corresponding nearly enough to his ideal, to constitute a female of his own individual species; and the delight he takes in her consists primarily in her timeliness, no matter what form it may take from the special character of the pair. The other illustration is from man in his relation to things rather than women, for in this relation also there are very evident marriages: a man at the marrying age takes delight (say) in certain pictures, and they modify his original idea of beauty as no others can after, so that the more he revolt against them the more they will hold

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him through his memory; and it is the same in the relations of men with women, many a man goes through life without ever going to the altar (or even to bed) with a woman, but we ask you, does any man or any woman go through life unmarried?

This should be enough to show that there is at least a *prima facie* case for the assertion, that marriage has a basis not only in humanity but in all nature; and consequently that we shall be getting back to the very source of laws and morals, in turning away from them to the sterner discipline of heart-searching: this Physiology is as much a song as a sermon, and as much a sermon as a song,—it shows us Philomel putting her breast against a thorn, in order that she may sing out of her pain. That divorce does not mean sexual promiscuity, but exposure of the heart to an opposite desire, is the meaning of the husband's constancy amid an atmosphere of animal liberty: Milton expressed the same faith in the chastity of nature, when he wrote his pamphlet advocating free divorce; he saw that the law of marriage had arisen as a statement of what men do naturally, and that it was time to relax it when it became an imposition on nature, a protection of man's sexual desire from the competition of the maternal,—which keeps the wild animal faithful to its species, that mystic incorporation of the members which is the ideal child. Balzac's husband is to make painful effort, he is to discipline himself strictly, but his sovereign lord is to be none but his own progressive desire: this Balzac saw as the paradox of the *will*, which intrigued him throughout his whole life, being the subject of his very earliest work, a treatise written in his school-days; unfortunately it was discovered by an usher, who rapped Master Honoré on the knuckles for wasting his time, and threw the Treatise on the Will into the fire,—a loss which its author never ceased to deplore, though we doubt if its preservation would ever have won it such fame! Note that Balzac never gives duty or responsibility, the expression of will in its purely negative or human phase, as the motive for the husband's perseverance in marriage: these belong to the conscious loyalty of vows, and so he always gives jealousy with its implication of pursuit; for when intensive study reveals the woman as a succession of women, loyalty takes its pleasure as Don Juan among them, and so the will works its way backward through stricter negation to positive freedom.

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WHAT IS BALZAC ?

Balzac's style has just the character of a man walking backwards, awkwardly and erratically, with hands out to feel for the objects which he cannot see; it also reminds one of a Wren church, with its attempt to express the Christian idea in Pagan form, only that Balzac lacked the intellect of Wren, as he lacked the grace of Sterne: he was pure monster, possessed wholly by the maternal passion, which heaves up the earth in mountains, and gives to his writing the grossness of pregnancy. But this deformity is only external! if we could see the operation of love within the womb, if we could see the crystal being shaped within the mountain, what grace and power of movement would be revealed, what orderly swing of planets round what blazing suns! We take this occasion to plead, that if our translation of the book seem in some places too free, it is because we were always trying to see the starry system in the mountain, to pluck the form out of the deformity . . . Reader, would you see with your eyes the love, described by Balzac in his comedy, and again in this our laborious prose? a Venetian painter put his vision of it on canvas, and the picture is in our National Gallery; go to-day or to-morrow, look at the Origin of the Milky Way, Balzac and Tintoretto will illuminate one another for you! See the male swooping down on the female, but in his hand a love for her maternity; see the virgin mother, how modest in her nakedness; see the eagle with the flame of spontaneous love in his talons, soaring above the peacock magnificent but vain, the very image of illusive vows! The stars that are the mother's love are springing apart, nowhere is there fixity of being, you see and feel the dryness of divorce: only contrast the clinging love in Titian's Venus and Adonis, how wet to sight and feeling is the picture! the mirrors of illusion are not shattered, it might be a reflection in water. All the more beautiful, yes! but Balzac cries with Isaiah, "I will have burning instead of beauty!" Tintoretto lived late enough to catch the idea from Luther, his youthful mind was rocked by waves from that great dividing of the waters.

As to Balzac and Wren, note that each of them followed a period of revolution, in which a king lost his head; in other words, a revolt of the female people against a sensual and sentimental husband, an unprogressive Stuart or Bourbon, become intolerable

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to the female modesty with its memory of a divine ancestor, who should be born again of the people's virginity, and was so born in the heroes Cromwell and Napoleon: it is a parallel which the Monster delighted to draw, and without doubt the great divorce of king and people, and the love which it set free in all that generation, was what gave Balzac his understanding of marriage, and made love the theme of so many of his contemporaries. This book was begun in 1825, exactly a hundred years ago, when Balzac was but twenty-six years of age: Stendhal's book on love had then been out three years, but though our young friend from Touraine was personally acquainted with its author, it is doubtful if he had read the book or even heard of it; there are no signs of its influence in the *Physiology*, as there almost certainly would have been, for we are all attracted by ideas the opposite of our own, and Balzac in particular could never resist winking with his weaker eye. Their acquaintance can hardly have been intimate as Stendhal was eighteen years senior, and anyhow he was just the man not to mention his own book, for like all poets of love in its extensive or social rather than its intimate phase, he liked to be known as a gentleman rather than as a scribbler; and as only seventeen copies of his book were sold in its first eleven years on the bookstalls, Balzac was not likely to hear of it from anyone else: many years later, when Stendhal was beginning to be recognised, our kindly Monster published such an extravagant eulogy of him, that he was accused by Sainte-Beuve of having invented his hero!

Both writers were obviously influenced by Byron, who had published most of *Don Juan* before Stendhal began his book, and only died the year before Balzac began his: if *Don Juan* is the enemy in this epic of marriage, he is also in a sense the hero, for the husband is always exhorted to beat him at his own game. The prettiest example of the model husband is the Comte de Nocé, who only appears in a single anecdote, but may be taken as the hero of the book: he is an elderly man who has rashly married a young wife, but who between patient study and brilliant strategy, taking form together in a most perfect courtesy, manages to keep her faithful to the day of his death; but the touch that most appeals to us is this, his wife never knew till after his death, that he had always suffered acutely from gout. Imagine the

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sentimental Mr. Brown! There is perhaps a truer idea of courtesy in this book than in any ever written, for here it does not mean an easy condescension to weakness, it means being stronger than woman in her strength, rising above her fury to drop flowers on it: Mr. Brown meets the hostility of his wife on the same level, so that whether he is furious himself or beautifully reasonable, he is not in a position to drop flowers; there can be no courtesy without divorce, nor without a spicing of Macchiavelli. We are told that when a wife desires a lover, there is nothing she will not stick at to alienate her husband, and he must have the courage to love her through it all: by Heaven! if the Monster could not put words together, he could sometimes make them sing.

"In the valley of Jehoshaphat a man could not advance a better claim to glory, than that in life he had brought happiness to his mate: " there is matter in that for an immortal lyric, and a warning for many of us, who may think our claim to glory pretty good. What is it a woman most desires, what is it for which she would give all the nights of Messalina? this is answered in a ringing passage, it comes in the No, Reader, you shall not be a Little Jack Horner! To sum up, we find that this is a true physiology of marriage, for while it teaches conscious effort, it reveals a motive in natural impulse: the difference between the love before marriage and that after is seen to consist just in this, that whereas the earlier begins as a natural impulse and ends in the conscious effort of vows, the later recovers spontaneity by reversal of the order, the motive for the effort being picked out of the future by memory. And effort is revealed not as clinging but as divorce, which does not mean (as might appear) the rejection of repulsiveness, for that was implied earlier in the pursuit of attractiveness; it means paradoxically the pursuit of repulsiveness, by turning away from it to study it in the memory, which alone gives realistic vision of the object: thus the lover is gripped in spite of himself by an unapparent attraction, and duty becomes a natural impulse to exceed itself, by devotion not merely to one but to a succession of women, when any such development in the wife is a breach of contract. We also find that this Physiology is a true work of art, inasmuch as its monstrous style is the most appropriate to a monstrous idea, namely the subterranean heaving of maternal passion: contradiction is the only method of expressing

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religious truth, and marriage is such a truth, in that it asserts the unity of two persons. As in the case of the divine Trinity, the idea of unity only has force so long as the several persons are kept distinct: a muddle is not a god, nor is a muddle a marriage; hence the necessity for perpetual divorce.

Those who have done us the honour to read this Preface may be surprised, when starting upon the book itself, to find this sentence staring them in the face, "Marriage has *no* basis in nature:" that however is only a quotation from Napoleon, which the Monster may well have believed himself to be illustrating, but the truth is—well, see the Preface! Did he ever know what he was doing? what need had he to know, being infallible as nature herself? And now let us give him the honour of the last word, for he is a female thing if ever there was one! indeed he is himself like the wife he describes, wooing us to persevere in study of his abominations: which for long we found repellent as he well knew them to be, but in the effort have found for you, Honoré, that involuntary love which is *le bonheur*. The book (as we have said) abounds in aphorisms, which are numbered and set forth with great prominence: it is a form for which the author had little aptitude, but there is one specimen embedded in the text, which is a perfect example of what an aphorism should be, as profound as it is witty, and as witty as it is profound; it expresses most beautifully the religious idea, that the force of a unity lies in the distinction of its parts, in other words that divorce is the essence of marriage, coalition of parties being the death of the state. As the author seems to have been unaware of its value, we have fondly lifted it from its bed of earth, and here give it the prominence it deserves: "I would have you to know," says the Monster, "that marriage is not only the whole of human life, it is two human lives."

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MARRIAGE HAS NO BASIS IN NATURE.—

THE FAMILY IN THE EAST IS ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FROM THE FAMILY IN THE WEST.—MAN IS THE MINISTER OF NATURE, AND SOCIETY IS HIS GRAFT ON THAT TREE.—LAWS ARE SUBJECT TO MORALS, AND MORALS VARY.—THEREFORE MARRIAGE, LIKE ALL THINGS HUMAN, IS TO BE PERFECTED GRADUALLY.

These words, pronounced before the Council of State by Napoleon in the discussion on the Civil Code made a deep impression on the author of this book ; perhaps without his knowing it they planted in him the germ of the work, which to-day he offers to the public. When he was studying French Law in youth, the word *adultery* stirred him strangely. Frequent as it is in the Code, this word always drew after it a lugubrious train of ideas. Tears, shame, hatred, terror, secret crime, bloody feuds, bereaved families, misery generally : these, personified, appeared to his imagination, immediately he read the sacramental word, *adultery* !

Later, on entering the fringe of cultivated society, the author observed that relief from the severity of marriage was there found in adultery ; indeed, he found that the number of happy couples was a small minority. So he came to recognise, believing himself the first to do so, that of all human inventions marriage is the least advanced. But in truth it is a regular observation in young men ; and with him as with so many others it was soon lost in the turmoil of his thoughts, like a stone thrown into the bosom of a lake. Meanwhile the author in spite of himself was making other observations ; and slowly there formed in his mind as it were a swarm of ideas on the nature of the marriage relation ; ideas that could be called more or less just. Literary works take form in the mind as mysteriously as grow the truffles amid the scented plains of Perigord.

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Following on the early religious awe he felt for adultery, and on the pronouncement that he had thoughtlessly made, there arose one morning a trivial thought, which became the centre of his ideas. It was a light epitome of marriage, as follows: husband and wife fall in love for the first time after living together twenty-seven years! He amused himself with this little summary of marriage, and passed a whole week delightfully in grouping round the innocent epigram the multitude of ideas, which he had acquired unconsciously and was surprised to find in his mind. The tone of jest gave way to a series of magisterial judgments; till the author, satiated by his own thoughts, listlessly relapsed into his habitual laziness.

Nevertheless, the combination of science and pleasantry in that little germ was developing in the soil of his mind. While he seemed to have renounced the idea, it was quietly taking root and establishing itself; or should it rather be compared to a branch, which is washed up on the beach of a winter's evening, and on the morrow is seen to be all white with crystals, in the fantastic designs of the night's frost? Thus the skeleton of the idea survived, and became the point of departure for many moral extensions. It might be compared also to a polypus, engendered of itself. The impressions of the author's youth, the observations which a fortunate affluence enabled him to make, were illustrated for him by the smallest occurrences. More and more the mass of ideas came to be harmonised, took life and almost personality, and so marched through those countries of fancy, in which the fond soul loves to give liberty to its progeny.

Amid his daily occupations there was always a voice, uttering relevations most ironical, even at moments when he was contemplating with the greatest pleasure (it might be) a woman dancing, or smiling in conversation. Just as Mephistopheles, in the terrible assembly on the Brocken, with his finger points out to Faust the sinister figures, so a demon was felt by the author, amid the glories of the ball-room, to come and tap him familiarly on the shoulder, and to say in his ear: "Do you see that enchanting smile? it is a smile of hate." Next the demon would be seen strutting like a captain in the old comedies of Hardy, and shaking out the purple folds of an embroidered cloak, while he tried to polish up the sequins and tinsel of ancient glory. Another time he would appear in a

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street, where with a shout of laughter, large and free as that of Rabelais, he would write up on a wall a word that might serve as pendant to the famous "Trinque," the only oracle obtained from the Sacred Bottle. Often he let himself be seen, this literary Trilby, seated on piles of books; among which he would point maliciously with his crooked fingers to a pair of yellow volumes, whose titles seemed to be written in fire; then when he saw the author of this work attentive, he would spell out, in a voice as raucous as the music of a harmonica, "Physiology of Marriage!"

But his favourite time for manifestation was the evening, when the mind is dreamy; as a caressing fairy then, he would try with tender words to tame the soul he had possessed. At once seductive and bantering, pliant as a woman and cruel as a tiger, his friendliness was more to be dreaded than his hate; for he could not give a kiss without a scratch also. On one such night he tried the power of all his sorcery, crowning it by a supreme effort: he came and sat on the edge of the bed, in guise of a maiden burning with love, who first spoke only from her brilliant eyes, but whose secret escaped her lips in the end. "This," said the demon, "is the prospectus of a cork suit, by means of which it will be possible to walk dry on the Seine. This other volume is the report of the Institute on a costume to enable us to pass through flames without being burnt. Now will you, Sir, not propose something, to protect marriage from the evils both of heat and of cold? Only listen! here is 'The art of preserving alimentary substances,'—'The art of preventing chimneys from smoking,' 'The art of making good mortar,'—'The art of tying a cravat,'—'The art of carving joints of meat . . . ' He named in a minute such a prodigious number of books, that the author was as it were spell-bound. "These myriads of books have been devoured," he went on, "and yet, not everyone in the world builds or eats meat, not everyone wears a cravat or enjoys a fire: but everyone marries a little! Here, look!"

He made a gesture with his hand, which seemed to bring into view a distant ocean, where all the books of the century were tossing in diverse movement. The octodecimos were skimming over the surface; the octavos when thrown in made a heavy sound, sank to the bottom and only rose again with difficulty, being hindered by duodecimos and trigesimo-secundos, which abounded

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so as to form a light foam. The angry waves were loaded with journalists, with foreman-printers, with stationers, with apprentices, with clerks; only the heads of all being visible, bobbing about among the books. There was a clamour of voices as when schoolboys are bathing. Coming and going in boats were some others, whose business was to fish out the books and lay them on the shore in front of a great and scornful person, clothed in black, and dry and cold in demeanour: he was the Public, and they the booksellers. The demon pointed with his finger to a cutter decorated with flags, which was scudding under full sail; on an awning it bore this legend, which he read in a piercing voice, at the same time giving a sardonic laugh: "Physiology of Marriage."

About this time the author took a mistress, and the devil left him in peace, for things would have been made too hot for him had he returned to a house occupied by a woman. Several years passed, without torments other than those of love, and the author believed himself cured of one infirmity by another. But one evening in a Paris drawing-room, when the company were seated in a circle round the fire-place, one of the men related the following story in a sepulchral voice.

A strange thing happened at Ghent while I was there. A certain lady, ten years a widow, was lying mortally ill; her last breath being awaited by three collateral heirs, who never left her bedside, for fear of her making a will in favour of the poor of the town. The dying woman never spoke, appeared to be in a torpor, and death seemed to be slowly taking possession of her mute and livid face. Can you envisage the three relatives, toward the middle of a winter's night, sitting in silence beside the bed? An aged nurse is shaking her head; the doctor, seeing that the illness has reached its final period, takes his hat in one hand, and with the other makes a sign to the watchers as if to say: "There will be no need for me to come again." In the solemn stillness the low whistling of a snow-storm could be heard, as it drove against the outside shutters. Fearing that the eyes of the patient might be distressed by the light, the youngest of the heirs had fitted a shade to the candle beside the bed; so that the circle of light just reached the pillow, on which the sickly yellow of her face could be distinguished, like a cheap gilt Christ

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on a cross of tarnished silver. The flickering of a lively fire in the grate alone relieved the gloom, which throughout the rest of the room so fitly prepared for the drama about to be unfolded.

And now suddenly a burning coal fell out on to the polished floor, as if to presage an event. At the sound the sick woman sat up in bed, almost with a spring, and opened two eyes as clear as a cat's; while the watchers all regarded her in amazement. She was staring at the burning coal; and before anyone could think of stopping her, so unexpected was the swift delirious movement, she was out of bed, had snatched up the tongs and thrown the coal back into the grate. The nurse, the doctor, the relations, now rushed forward; the dying woman was carried back to bed, and her head laid on the pillow. Within a few minutes she was dead; but even then she seemed to keep her eyes still on the floor-board, on which the burning coal had lain. Hardly had the Countess Van Ostroem breathed her last, when the three co-heirs began to look doubtfully from one to another, suspecting a mystery beneath the floor. As they were Belgians, they were no less prompt with a plan of action. Three words in their deep voices were enough, and it was agreed that none of them should leave the room. A footman was sent to fetch a carpenter.

When the three Belgians gathered round on that rich flooring to watch the insertion of a chisel by a young workman, the beating of their collateral hearts could almost be heard. The plank is coming up. 'My aunt gave a sign,' said the youngest of the heirs—"No, she was only affected by the flickering of the light," said the eldest, who kept one eye on the supposed treasure, while he glanced at the dead woman. The dismayed relations found, exactly under the spot where the coal had fallen, a lump of plaster neatly enclosing something. "Go on," said the eldest heir. The apprentice's chisel then revealed a human head; and by some remains of clothes they were able to identify the Count, whom everyone believed to have died in Java, and whose loss had been deeply mourned by his wife.

The man who told this story was tall and dry-looking, with brown hair and hazel eyes, and the present writer thought he saw in him a vague resemblance to the demon who had formerly tormented him; only the stranger lacked a cloven foot. Suddenly

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the word *adultery* sounded in the writer's ears, and this like a bell called up in his imagination that procession of lugubrious figures, which had ever followed in the train of the magic syllables. From that evening began again the phantasmagorical persecutions of a work not in existence; indeed at no period of his life was the author so assailed by illusive ideas, on the fatal subject of this book. But he resisted the evil spirit bravely, though this latter connected every little event with the imaginary work, and like a customs-officer marked all with his initials, in mockery as it seemed.

Some days later the author happened to be in the company of two ladies. The first had been one of the most witty and cultivated ladies at the court of Napoleon; but in the general subversion attending the Restoration she had lost this high social position, and now lived in strict retirement. The second was young and beautiful, and already a prominent figure in the fashionable world of Paris. Her age was twenty-two, and the other's forty; thus they were able to be friends, having such different grounds of vanity that their pretensions rarely clashed. If these two continued in presence of the author a somewhat frank conversation on woman's arts, it was because he was to one of them a person of no consequence, while the other had discerned the nature of his mind.

"Have you observed, my dear, that women in general love only fools?"

"What is that you are saying, Duchess? how can you reconcile such an opinion with the aversion women have from their husbands?"

Here the author said to himself, "Rank tyranny! here is my devil now in a skirt!"

"No, my dear, I am not joking," replied the Duchess, "it is a fact that should make us shudder for ourselves; I speak from cool observation of the people I knew in old days. Cleverness always wounds us by its brilliance; perhaps we are frightened too of a gifted man, for he will be too proud to be jealous, and he will not trouble himself to please us; and this is the reason perhaps, that we would rather raise a man to our own level than climb to his. Though a man of talent will have successes in which we may share, it is the fool who provides our pleasures; and we would always rather hear the remark, 'There goes a handsome man!'"

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than hear that our lover has been elected a member of the Institute."

"That is enough, Duchess; you have terrified me!" So saying, the young beauty began calling to mind the bachelors with whom the women of her acquaintance were madly in love, and she found not a single man of intellect among them. "By my virtue," she cried, "their husbands are worth more!"

"These men are their husbands," the Duchess answered gravely.

"Is it inevitable," asked the author, "this misfortune threatening the husbands of France?"

"Quite!" answered the Duchess, laughing, "and the resentment, which some women feel for those so happily unhappy as to have an affair, shows how little voluntary is their own chastity. Were it not for fear of the Devil, there would be many a Lais; otherwise virtue is due to dryness of the heart, or (it may be) to the incompetent behaviour of a first lover. In still other cases . . ."

The author checked the torrent of revelation, in order to confide to the two ladies the project by which he was so persecuted; at which they smiled, and promised plenty of advice. The youngest furnished the first of the capital for the enterprise, in saying gaily that she undertook to prove by mathematics, that women entirely virtuous were reasonable beings. The author on his return home, cried to his demon: "Appear! I am ready, let us sign the pact." The demon came no more.

If the author writes the biography of his book, it is not out of vanity; he relates facts which may serve as material for the history of human thought, and which in any case will help to explain the work itself. To the anatomists of thought it will not be unimportant to know, for example, that the soul is a woman, as was shewn by the book's appearing everywhere written, when the author forbade himself to think of it. He would find a page of it on the bed of an invalid, another on a boudoir sofa; the expressions of women, pirouetting in the raptures of the waltz, would supply him with ideas; a word or a gesture would fertilize his brain, rebellious as it was. But on the day when he said to himself, "This work that obsesses me shall be carried out," all this ceased; and like the three Belgians he found a skeleton, where he hoped to seize a treasure.

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The demon of temptation was succeeded by a female figure, pale and tender, and of charming manners; in her visits she was so good-humoured, that though she criticized there was no sting in it. She was more abundant in words than in ideas, and seemed to be afraid of noise; she might have been the familiar spirit of the honourable members who sit in the centre of the Chamber. "Would it not be better," she used to say, "to leave things as they are? Are they so bad, after all? One must believe in marriage, as in the immortality of the soul; and you are certainly not making a book in praise of conjugal happiness. I suppose you will arrive at your conclusions after the study of a few Parisian households, which most likely will be exceptional. Possibly you will find some husbands ready to betray their wives to you, but no son will betray his mother to you . . . When the work is out, some people will be wounded by the opinions you profess, and these will suspect your morals, will ascribe to you the worst intentions. In short, to lay a healing hand on this social scrofula, you would need to be a king, or at least first-consul."

Reason, though she might present herself to the author in the most attractive form, was never listened to; for in the distance folly was shaking the bauble of Panurge, and his wish was to seize it. But when he succeeded in laying hands on the bauble, he found that it was as heavy as the club of Hercules; for the priest of Meudon had so enriched it, that to lift it was beyond the powers of a young man, priding himself less on being able to write than on being well gloved.

"Well, is our work finished?" asked the younger of the two female collaborators.

"Ah! Madam, will you compensate me for all the hatreds it may arouse?"

She made a vague gesture, to which the author replied with a listless expression.

"What! do you hesitate? publish it, have no fear: nowadays, a book is accepted much more for its style than for its matter."

Although the author comes forward only as the humble secretary of two ladies, in co-ordinating their remarks he has accomplished a further task. Again, on the subject of marriage, it was one thing to collect the thoughts which everyone has in mind but nobody expresses, it is another to go and publish such

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a study, for is it not to expose one's self to what no one would desire? However, the eclecticism of the study may save it; for by a light and airy manner the author has sought to popularise ideas, which may bring consolation to many. It has always been his aim to arouse unknown forces in the human soul; thus in defending sometimes the most material motives, he may have introduced new pleasures to the intellect. At the same time the author is not so foolish as to hope, that his pleasantries have always been in perfect taste; the diversity of people's minds alone ensures that he shall be condemned as often as approved. If he has tried always to present his thoughts in the form of anecdotes, it is because the matter was too serious to be popular, and the anecdote serves as a passport for all moralizing, being the great anti-narcotic of literature.

In this book, so full as it is of observation and analysis, it was inevitable that the author should become egoistic and the reader weary; which is one of the worst misfortunes that could befall a work, as the author cannot disguise from himself. He has therefore divided the subjects of this long study in such a way as to provide stopping-places for the reader; in which he has followed the precedent of a writer, whose work on *Taste* is somewhat similar to his own on marriage, and from whom he now begs leave to borrow a sentence, expressive of a thought which is common to them both. Let it be taken as homage paid to a predecessor, to whom death came so hard on the heels of success. "When I write or speak of myself in the singular, using the pronoun I, that means a confabulation with the reader; he can then scrutinise, disagree, doubt or even laugh; but when I arm myself with the redoubtable *we*, I demand his submission, absolutely." (Brillat-Savarin, preface to the "Physiology of Taste.")

DECEMBER 15, 1829.

FIRST PART: General Considerations

WE SHALL PROTEST AGAINST INSENSATE LAWS UNTIL THEY ARE REPEALED, IN THE MEANWHILE ONLY SUBMITTING TO THEM OF NECESSITY."—"Diderot, supplement to the "Voyage de Bougainville."

Meditation I: The Subject

MEDITATION I : THE SUBJECT.

PHYSIOLOGY, what do you want with me ? Is it your aim to demonstrate to us,—

THAT MARRIAGE UNITES FOR LIFE TWO BEINGS, WHO ARE UNKNOWN TO ONE ANOTHER ?

THAT THERE IS NO LIFE APART FROM PASSION AND THAT NO PASSION IS STRONGER THAN MARRIAGE ?

THAT MARRIAGE, THOUGH CONTRARY TO THE LAWS OF NATURE, IS NECESSARY TO THE MAINTENANCE OF SOCIETY ?

THAT THE ONLY PALLIATIVE TO THE ILLS OF MARRIAGE, NAMELY DIVORCE, WILL BE DEMANDED ONCE MORE BY ALL ?

THAT MARRIAGE, WITH ALL ITS INCONVENIENCES, IS STILL THE BASIS OF PROPERTY ?

THAT THERE IS SOMETHING TOUCHING IN THE ASSOCIATION OF TWO BEINGS, TO SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER THROUGHOUT LIFE'S TROUBLES ?

THAT IT IS SOMEWHAT RIDICULOUS TO EXPECT TWO WILLS TO BE GUIDED BY THE SAME THOUGHT ?

THAT A WIFE IS IN THE POSITION OF A SLAVE ?

THAT NO MARRIAGE IS ENTIRELY HAPPY ?

THAT MARRIAGE IS PREGNANT WITH CRIME, AND THAT THE WORST MURDERERS ARE NOT THOSE WE HEAR OF ?

THAT FIDELITY IS IMPOSSIBLE, AT LEAST TO MEN ?

THAT IF AN ENQUIRY COULD BE MADE AS TO THE PASSAGE OF PROPERTY FROM FATHER TO SON, THIS WOULD BE FOUND MORE OFTEN THAN NOT TO BE ATTENDED WITH TROUBLE ?

THAT ADULTERY IS THE CAUSE OF MORE EVIL, THAN EVER MARRIAGE HAS BEEN OF GOOD ?

THAT INFIDELITY IN WIVES CAN BE TRACED BACK TO THE MOST PRIMITIVE SOCIETIES; AND THAT MARRIAGE IN OPPOSING A FACT PERPETUATES A FRAUD ?

The Physiology of Marriage

THAT LOVE HAS ITS LAWS, AND THEY CAN BIND TOGETHER TWO BEINGS SO STRONGLY, THAT NO MERE HUMAN LAW CAN SEPARATE THEM ?

THAT WHILE THERE ARE CERTAIN MARRIAGES ENTERED IN THE PARISH-REGISTER, THERE ARE OTHERS CONSECRATED ONLY BY NATURE, THROUGH A SWEET CONFORMITY OF THOUGHT OR BODY, OR EVEN IN SPITE OF DIFFERENCES; AND THAT HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE THUS FOR EVER IN CONFLICT ?

THAT THERE ARE HUSBANDS BOTH HANDSOME AND WITTY, WHOSE WIVES TAKE LITTLE UGLY FOOLS AS LOVERS ?

Each of these questions provides a subject for a book; but the books have been written, and the questions are answered for ever. Physiology, what do you want with me ? Do you reveal new principles ? Are you going to suggest, that we must have wives in common ? Lycurgus and some of the Greek tribes, as well as Tartars and other savages, have tried it.

Or must we lock up our wives ? The Turks did so, and to-day are setting them free again.

Or must we marry our daughters without dowry, and deprive them of the right to inherit ? Certain English authors, as well as moralists of other countries, have argued that together with divorce, this would make for happiness of marriage more surely than anything.

Or to every marriage should a little Hagar be added ? That requires no legislation; the article of the Code which decrees penalties for the adulterous wife, no matter where the offence be committed, and that which only punishes a husband for having his concubine to live in his home, implicitly allow mistresses in town.

Sanchez has discoursed on all the penitentiary cases arising out of marriage; he has even argued as to the legality of every pleasure, and its expediency; he has set forth all the duties of spouses, both moral and corporal; indeed his work would fill twelve octavo volumes, if such a reprint were to be made from the great folio entitled *De Matrimonio*. Swarms of jurisconsults have produced piles of treatises, on the legal difficulties arising out of marriage; there even exist works on the act of coition

Meditation I: The Subject

as ordered by the Courts to test impotence. Legions of physicians have published legions of books on marriage, in relation to surgery and medicine. In this nineteenth century, therefore, a book on the physiology of marriage is a drop in the ocean, the work of a simpleton addressed to other simpletons. Priests of old have taken their golden balance and weighed the last scruple; lawyers of old have put on their spectacles, and have distinguished and classified; physicians of old have taken the scalpel and have probed every wound; judges of old have taken their seats on the bench, and have pronounced on every ground of annulment; generations of humanity have lived and died, each in its turn uttering cries of joy and cries of grief; every age has thrown its vote into the urn. The Holy Ghost, the poets, the philosophers, have all said their say, from the time of Eve to the Trojan war, from Helen to Mme. de Maintenon, from the wife of Louis XIV. to the Contemporary—as we call the authoress of the memoirs. Physiology! what do you want with me? Do you by chance wish to present to us a series of pictures, more or less skilful, to convince us of a man's reasons for marrying? as for example—

*AMBITION?—BUT NO ONE DENIES THAT.

GOODNESS, THE DESIRE TO RESCUE A GIRL FROM THE TYRANNY OF HER MOTHER?

SPITE, THE WISH TO CUT OUT A COLLATERAL HEIR?

DISDAIN OF AN UNFAITHFUL MISTRESS?

SATIETY OF SWEET FREEDOM ENJOYED AS A BACHELOR?

A JOKE?—IT IS ALWAYS A POSSIBLE REASON.

A BET?—LORD BYRON IS AN INSTANCE.

A POINT OF HONOUR?—GEORGE DANDIN'S REASON.

INTEREST?—BUT THAT IS TOO COMMON.

THE HIGH SPIRITS OF YOUTH, IN THE EXCITEMENT OF LEAVING COLLEGE?

A MAN'S OWN UGLINESS, FOR FEAR HE MIGHT NOT GET A WIFE WHEN HE WANTED ONE?

THE NECESSITY OF PROVIDING FOR—*our* SON?

*In French this is an alphabet, formed by the initial letters of the questions

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A SENSE OF OBLIGATION, THE MAIDEN HAVING BEEN FRAIL ?
PASSION, IN ORDER TO BE CURED OF IT MOST SURELY ?
A LAWSUIT, MARRIAGE BEING THE CHEAPEST WAY OF ENDING IT ?
GRATITUDE ?—BUT HE WOULD BE GIVING MORE THAN EVER HE
RECEIVED.

PRUDENCE ?—THERE ARE STILL SOME THEORISTS WHO MIGHT.
A WILL, WHEN A DEPARTED UNCLE HAS ENCUMBERED HIS LEGACY
WITH A DAUGHTER TO BE MARRIED ?

CUSTOM, IN IMITATION OF ONE'S FOREFATHERS ?
OLD AGE, TO FINISH UP ?

YATIDI, WHICH IS TURKISH FOR BED-TIME, AND SUMS UP ALL
THE REQUIREMENTS OF THAT RACE ?

PIETY, AS WITH THE DUKE OF SAINT-AIGNAN, WHO WAS UN-
WILLING TO BE A SINNER ?

But all those subjects have furnished subjects for thirty
thousand comedies, and a hundred thousand romances! Physiology,
for the fourth and last time, what do you want with me ?

Everything that can be said on this subject is worn and trite
as the pavements of the street, common as a public square.
Marriage is better known than Barabbas in the Gospel; all the
ideas that it awakes are old, and go doddering through literature
from the beginning of the world; there is neither useful opinion
nor absurd project, which has not found an author, a printer, a
book-seller and a reader.

Allow me to say with Rabelais, the master of us all: "Worthy
folk, God save you and keep you! But where are you? I cannot
see you. Wait till I put on my spectacles . . . Ah! now I see you.
And you enjoy good health, eh, you and your wives and children?
I am glad of that."

But it is not for you that I write. Since you have grown-up
children, all is said.

"Ah! you are there, illustrious drinkers, my gouty darlings!
and you, inexhaustible rutters, powdered dandies, who panta-
gruelise all the day, with your privy wenches as eager as you,

Meditation I: The Subject

going it at tierce and at sext and at nones, likewise at vespers and compline, and if you could would never cease! ”

But it is not to you either, that the Physiology of Marriage is addressed, since you are not married—and so may you remain for ever!

“ As for you, you pack of begging friars, canting vagabonds, hypocrites, pharisees, cowed libertines, tale-bearing pilgrims and all such, imposing on the world with your masks and disguises: behind me, I say! Off the course, mastiffs! Out of this, shavelings! What the devil,—are you still there? ”

There only remain to me such good souls as love to laugh. None of your weepers and wailers for me! who on any excuse will plunge into verse or prose, telling their ailments in odes, sonnets and elegies; none of your dreamers and far-away souls, but give me some good old pantagruelists, who do not count the cost when it is a case of feasting and jollity; who find virtue in the book of “ Peas and Bacon, cum commento ” by Rabelais, and in the book of “ The dignity of cod-pieces,” appreciating those fair books of joy and fatness, light to take up but for their mastery demanding hardihood.

We can hardly laugh at the Government any longer, my friends, since it has found a way to raise fifteen hundred millions. The papists, the bishops’ men, the monks and the monkesses, are not yet rich enough for us to be able to drink at their tables; but let St. Michael come, who drove the Devil out of heaven, and perhaps we shall see good times once more. To start with, there is nothing left to us in France but marriage, to be matter for laughter. Disciples of Panurge, I want as readers none but you; you know when to take up a book and when to put it down, you can read at your ease, understanding a hint and getting nourishment from a marrow-bone.

Well, gentlemen of the microscopic eye, who can see nothing larger than a dot; well Messrs. the Critics, have you said all your say, have you gone over me thoroughly? And finally have you pronounced, that a book on marriage is as impossible to make as a broken jug to mend?

—Yes, Mr. Wiseacre! Put marriage through the wine-press, and all that will come out will be pleasure for bachelors and tedium for husbands; it is an eternal law. A million printed pages will be found to have no other burden.

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Well, here is my first proposition: marriage is a mortal combat; and at the outset the two spouses ask a blessing of heaven, because to love for ever is of all undertakings the most rash. It means war from the first; and the victory, which is liberty, remains with the cleverer.

—Agreed, but where is the novelty in your idea?

Listen, I address myself to the bridegrooms of yesterday and to-day, to those who in issuing from church or registry nurse a hope of keeping their wives to themselves; to those who, in face of others' misfortunes, are led by egoism or some inexplicable sentiment to, say to themselves, "That will not happen to me!" I address myself to those mariners, who after seeing good ships founder still put to sea; to those bachelors who themselves have wrecked more than one marriage, and yet venture to marry. Now you know my subject; is it not eternally new, as it is eternally old?

Picture to yourself a young man, or if you prefer, an old, who may or may not be in love, but has just acquired by a contract well and truly registered in the parish-books, in Heaven and on the roll of the manor, a young bride with flowing locks, eyes dark and humid, small feet and fingers delicately tapering, crimson lips and teeth of ivory, body shapely and tremulous, a dainty and appetising morsel, white as a lily, rich in all the rarest treasures of beauty: her lowered eyelashes are like spikes of the iron crown; her skin, a film as fine as the corolla of a white camelia, is tinted as with the juice of red camelias; on her maiden cheek is seen a bloom as of fruit on the tree, and the scarce perceptible down of a ripening peach; the azure of the veins only deepens the warmer tints of this translucent web; her being gives out life and asks for life; she is all joy and all love, all sweetness and all innocence. She loves her husband, or at least believes that she loves him. . . .

The fond husband has said in his secret heart, "These eyes will see none but me, this mouth will only quiver with love for me, this gentle hand will magically stroke no skin but mine, this sleeping soul will only awaken at my will; I alone shall plunge my hand in these shining tresses, I alone shall cover this tender head with rapturous kisses. To guard the bridal bed from plundering vagrants, death himself shall keep watch by my pillow;

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their blood or mine shall flow around love's throne, if any rashly attempt it. Rest, honour, happiness, paternal love, and pride in children's fortune; all these are centred here, and I will guard them as a lioness her cubs. Woe to any that shall set foot in my cave!"

Well, courageous athlete! we applaud your venture. But remember, no geometer has drawn lines of latitude and longitude on the conjugal sea; for old husbands have been ashamed to indicate the sandbanks, the reefs of rock, the breakers, the storm-regions, the coasts and the currents where they were wrecked, so humiliating was the loss of their ships to them. All hitherto have lacked a compass, a guide for the voyagers of marriage: this work is intended to serve as such.

Apart from grocers and drapers, there are many too occupied to give time to the study of those hidden motives from which women act, so that it is a work of charity to classify for them, by chapters and paragraphs, all the intimate situations of marriage; a good table of contents will then enable them to look up every movement of their wives' hearts, as a table of logarithms gives them the product of a multiplication. What do you think of us now? Is it not a novel enterprise, unattempted as yet by any philosopher, to show how a wife may be prevented from deceiving her husband? Will it not be the comedy of comedies? Will it not be another *speculum vitæ humanæ*? It must go beyond academic questions, which anyhow this meditation has dealt with sufficiently; in morals to-day, as in the exact sciences, it is facts that are required, particular observations: we have them for you.

Let us begin by examining the field of battle, at the same time analysing the forces of each party. Before arming our imaginary champion, let us calculate the numbers of the enemy, let us count the cossacks who will invade his little homeland.

Join our ship who will, laugh with us who can. Up anchor; make sail! You know just from what dot on the map you are starting; it is an advantage we have over many books. As to our fancy for laughing while we weep, and weeping while we laugh, as the divine Rabelais drank in eating and ate in drinking; as to our mania for putting Heraclitus and Democritus on the same page, of having neither style nor premeditated phrase: if any

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passenger complain, overboard with the old fat-head! Overboard with the corpses of classics and romantics, and give sail to the breeze!

Those gentry may accuse us of being like the man who says with a joyous air, "I am going to tell you a story that will make you laugh!" Let us inform them, that marriage is no laughing matter with us! They might have seen, that we regard it as a malady to which all are subject, and on which this book is a monograph.

—But you, with your ship or your book, remind us of those coachmen who crack their whips on leaving a stage, because they have some English as passengers. Your gallop will not have brought you half a league, when you will be getting down on pretence of fastening a bolt, to breathe your horses: why blow your trumpet before the victory?

Ah! dear Pantagruelists, it is enough to have pretensions to a success to-day, to obtain it; and as great works after all are only small ideas long drawn out, I see no reason why I should not hope to gather laurels, were it only to crown those well salted hams that shall help us to soak up the liquor.

One moment, skipper! Let us not start without giving a little definition. Reader, if you meet here and there in this book, even as in the world, the words "virtue" or "virtuous women," let us agree that virtue shall mean that laborious facility with which a wife reserves her heart for her husband; excepting when the word shall be employed in a general sense, a distinction which is left to the natural perception of the reader.

Meditation II: Conjugal Statistics

MEDITATION II: CONJUGAL STATISTICS.

THE government has been occupied for some twenty years in discovering how many acres of wood, of grass, of vines and of fallow are contained in the realm of France; it has even gone farther and calculated the number of each species of animals. Nor have our officials stopped there, they have counted the perches of wood, the pounds of beef, the quarts of wine, the number of apples and of eggs consumed annually in Paris. But no one has concerned himself, either for the honour of marriage, or in the interests of people getting married, or for the advance of morality and the perfecting of human institutions, to take a census of respectable women. What! can a French minister answer any question as to the number of men he has under arms, the number of spies, the number of employees, the number of scholars, but as to virtuous wives—nothing? If the fancy took a king of France to seek his august consort among his subjects, the government could not even lead him to the flock of most white sheep, from which to make his choice! Appeal would have to be made to some institution, giving the rose of good conduct; a proceeding which would invite ridicule.

So the ancients would seem to be our masters in politics as well as in morals. History tells us, that when Ahasuerus was taking a wife of the daughters of Persia, he chose Esther, as being the most beautiful and (mark this) the most virtuous: which shows that his ministers must have found some way of separating the cream of the population, so as to set it before him. Unhappily the Bible, so clear on all matrimonial questions, omits to give us the method of this selection.

Let us make up for the negligence of the government, by attempting for ourselves a classification and enumeration of the female sex in France. In this we claim the attention of all friends of public morals, and appoint them judges of our procedure. We shall try to be liberal enough in our estimates and exact enough in our deductions, to gain a general acceptance for the results of our analysis.

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The inhabitants of France are usually reckoned at thirty millions. Some naturalists are of opinion that the women exceed the men in number; but as many statisticians maintain the contrary, we shall take the number of women to be fifteen millions, as being the most probable estimate.

From this total we shall begin by subtracting about nine millions, as the number of those creatures who at first sight have a certain resemblance to women, but who on close examination cannot be admitted under this head. Let us explain. Naturalists have distinguished in man an unique species of the order of bi-mana, established by Duméril in his *Analytic Zoology*, page 16; though Bory St. Vincent was for including also the species orang-outang, by way of completing the order. Now if these zoologists see in us no more than a mammifer of thirty-two vertebræ, having a hyoid bone and more folds in the cerebral hemispheres than any other animal; if no other differences exist for them in this order than those resulting from climatic influence . . . Ah! but these have served to distinguish fifteen species, whose scientific names could be given were it worth while: well then, the physiologist has as good a right to establish his species and sub-species, according to the degrees of intelligence, or according to the conditions of moral or pecuniary existence.

The nine million beings we would exclude certainly present, at first sight, all the required characteristics of the human species; they have the hyoid bone, the coracoid snout, the acromion and the zygomatic arch: therefore the zoological society has a right to class them as a unique species of the order Bi-mana . . . But what of women? we cannot see them in this species! Here is a distinction that our physiology must insist on.

For us and for those to whom this book is addressed, woman is a rare variety of the human species; and so we proceed now to give her principal characteristics, in terms of physiology. This sub-species arose as a result of the particular care, which men, thanks to the power of gold and the moral heat of civilisation, have been able to give to its culture. A woman may be recognised primarily by the whiteness, the smoothness and the softness of her skin. She is disposed by nature to exquisite cleanliness; in her fingers is a horror of encountering anything but soft and scented objects; like the ermine, she sometimes dies of grief

Meditation II: Conjugal Statistics

at the sight of dirt on her snow-white garments. She delights in combing and powdering her hair, till it exhale intoxicating odours; in polishing her rosy nails and shaping them as almonds; in bathing continually her delicate limbs. At night she is only happy on the softest of couches, and by day on mattresses of hair; the horizontal position is that which she takes most willingly. Her voice is sweet and clear, her gestures gracious; she talks with a wonderful facility. She applies herself to no distressing labour; and yet, despite her apparent feebleness, there are burdens she can lift and carry with miraculous ease. She flees the blaze of the sun, and has ingenious ways of guarding against it. For her, to walk is a labour. Does she eat? it is a mystery unsolved. Are the necessities of other species hers? it is a problem.

Excessively curious, she is easily taken by him who can hide from her the smallest thing; her nature impels her ceaselessly toward the unknown. To love is her religion, and she has no thought but to please him she loves. To be loved is the aim of all her actions, to excite desire the purpose of her least movement. She only meditates on ways to shine; her element is the sphere of grace and refinement. It is for her that Indian maids spin the pliant hair of Tibetan goats, that Tarara weaves her airy veils, that Brussels throws her shuttles threaded with the finest and purest flax, that Visapour wrenches from the entrails of the earth sparkling pebbles, and that Sèvres gilds her white clay. She dreams night and day of new adornments; she spends her life in having dresses starched and kerchiefs ruffled. She always shows herself fresh and dazzling to strangers; whose admiration flatters her and whose desire charms her, though for them she cares nothing. The few hours, which she can spare from pleasure and the care of her person, she employs in singing the sweetest of songs; for her do France and Italy invent delicious airs, and Naples fix the soul of harmony in chords. In short, this species is queen of the world, and slave of a desire. She dreads marriage because it ends by spoiling the figure, but for its promise of pleasure surrenders to it. If she has children, it is not by design; and when they are grown she hides them.

These characteristics, taken at random from among a thousand, say! do they belong to those creatures with hands as black as apes', and skin stained like the parchment of an *olim* ;

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whose faces are burnt by the sun, and their necks wrinkled like turkeys'; whose covering is rags; whose voice is harsh, their intelligence null, and their odour unbearable; whose only thought is of the kneading-trough, and whose bodies are for ever bent over the earth; who dig, harrow, pitchfork, glean, mow, knead bread, strip hemp; whose dwellings are hovels, in which they lie scantily covered with straw, men and children huddled together with beasts; and whom it concerns little, how or whence comes their stream of children? To produce many for labour and the life of misery, that is all their care; and if their love-making is lighter than the work of the fields, still it is less of a pleasure than a speculation.

Let us face the facts! if there are women in shops whose whole day is spent between the candles and the brown-sugar; if there are farm-women milking cows; if there are wretched women used as beasts of burden in factories, shouldering box, bag and basket; if there exist unhappily so many creatures for whom the life of the soul, the refinements of education and the delicious storms of the heart are a paradise unapproachable, they must remain for the physiologist in the species—orang-outang! even though nature has willed that they have a coracoid snout, a hyoid bone and thirty-two vertebræ. Here we are only concerned with persons of leisure, with those who have both the time and the disposition to love, with the rich who have bought proprietary rights in the passions, with the intellectuals who have won a monopoly of the imagination. Anathema be all who do not live by the mind! Let us say *raca*, and double *raca*, to any who is not ardent, young, beautiful and passionate! It will be a public expression of the faith of those humanists, who can read and who know how to step into a carriage.

In our nine million proscriptions, no doubt, the tax-gatherer will see taxable persons, the magistrate will see liable parties, the legislator will see persons within the meaning of the act, the priest will see souls; but the man of culture, the lady's philosopher, while eating the dough-nut sown and harvested by the creatures, will exclude them, as we do, from the species woman. For him there is no woman but such as can inspire love; only those exist for him, who in a privileged education have taken the sacrament of thought, and in whom leisure has developed the faculty of

Meditation II: Conjugal Statistics

imagination. In short the only feminine being is she of whom the soul dreams in love, she who can give as much pleasure to the intellect as to the senses.

However, we must take into account that these nine million female pariahs produce here and there some thousands of peasant-women, who by an odd chance are as beautiful as goddesses: these find their way to Paris or other large towns, and some at last rise to be women in the true sense of the word; but for every thousand or two so privileged, there will be a hundred thousand who remain servants all their lives, or who abandon themselves to horrible vices. Small as is the number therefore of our village Pompadours, we must include them in an estimate of the feminine population.

The evidence from which we start is the discovery of statisticians, that in France the poor number eighteen millions, the independent ten millions, and the rich two millions. There exist therefore in France only six million women, with whom men of taste concern themselves, ever have or ever will concern themselves. Let us subject these social elect to a philosophic scrutiny.

We can safely assert, that the husbands of twenty years standing are over the danger of amorous invasion, and have no longer to fear the scandal of the divorce-court. And so from our six millions we must subtract some two million adorable women, who being past forty have seen all they desire of the world. Their own passions being asleep, they can arouse none in others, and so do not come within the scope of our inquiry. Beautiful they may still be, but love passes them by, and they have to find other interests to make life supportable; they throw themselves into religion, or else into cats and dogs, manias that are as harmless as God.

The estimates of population published by the Office of Longitude authorise us to subtract from the remainder another two millions, these being the number of little girls; pretty enough to make the mouth water, they still have to learn the A.B.C. of life. How innocently they play together, little thinking that those *beddybys*, in which now they romp so merrily, will one day be the cause of their weeping!

Now of the two million left any reasonable man will allow us to write off a hundred thousand, as unhappily born ugly,

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hunch-backed, crazy, rickety, sickly, blind or mutilated. This number will include also those who have the misfortune to be poor, though of gentle birth; like the others they must remain spinsters always, and so will have no opportunity to offend against the sacred laws of marriage.

And it will be granted surely, that another hundred thousand become Sisters of Saint Camilla, Sisters of Charity, nuns of all sorts, teachers, lady-companions, etc. Then there is another class, not to be included in this sacred company, namely the girls in their teens who are too big to play with little boys, and still too young to be scattering their wreaths of orange-blossom: their number is difficult to estimate, but it must be somewhere about three hundred thousand.

Lastly, of the million and a half still remaining at the bottom of our crucible, we must eliminate another half million units, as daughters of Baal who only give pleasure to the unrefined. Under this head we include, without fear that they will suffer by association, all kept women, dress-makers, shop-girls, drapers, actresses, singers and dancers, governesses, chamber-maids, etc.; these creatures can certainly excite the passions, but they would feel it indecent to inform a notary, an ecclesiastic and a host of grinning witnesses, of the day and the hour when they will give themselves to a lover. Their code, justly condemned by a fastidious society, has the advantage of not binding them to their men, either morally or legally. In short, as these women break no public vows, they are no concern of a work devoted exclusively to legitimate marriages.

It may be objected, that the number estimated for this class is very low; well, then it will compensate for others, which some amateur statisticians may consider inflated. If anyone in love with a rich dowager wishes to add her to our remaining million, he will be robbing the category of Sisters of Charity, or of chorus-girls, or of hunch-backs. In short, if we have only asked half a million to be allowed for our last category, the reason is that it is often augmented, as we have seen above, by favoured units from the nine million peasant women. We have neglected the working class and the small shop-keepers for the same reason; the women of these two social layers are the product of the efforts, made by the nine million female bimana to rise to the higher

Meditation II: Conjugal Statistics

regions of civilisation. Without this scrupulous exactitude on our part, many people might regard this statistical meditation as a joke.

We had indeed thought of organising a little class of a hundred thousand to constitute a sort of sinking-fund of the species, and to serve as an asylum for women while in an intermediate state, as widows for example; but we prefer to reckon broadly.

It is easy to prove the justice of our analysis, one test alone will suffice. A woman's life divides itself into three distinct periods, the first being from the cradle to the marriage-bed, the second being the years of marriage, the third and last beginning at that critical age when nature brutally serves a writ of eviction on the passions. These three stages of life, being roughly equal in duration, should divide in equal numbers a given quantity of women. Thus in a mass of six millions there should be found, neglecting the fractions which may be left to the learned to work out, about two million girls between the ages of one and eighteen, two million women of eighteen at least and forty at most, and two million old women. Further, the caprices of the social state have sub-divided the two million marriageable women into three unequal classes, as follows: those who for any of the reasons above given remain spinsters, those whose husbands care little as to their virtue, and finally the million legitimate women who are to be the subject of our study.

You see now from this careful count of the female population, that there hardly exists in France a little flock of a million white sheep; and into that favoured fold all the wolves are trying to find an entrance. But this million of women, already sifted on the table, must now be passed through a fine sieve.

To calculate more exactly the degree of confidence which a man should have in his wife, let us suppose for a moment that all wives are going to deceive their husbands. This hypothesis still allows us to subtract a twentieth, as the proportion of young people married but yesterday, who will be true to their vows at least for a period. Another twentieth at least will be ill; this is surely not to magnify the pains that beset humanity. Certain conditions of the man, said to destroy his empire over the heart of woman, as ugliness or melancholy or fatness, will claim another twentieth.

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Again, adultery does not establish itself in the heart of woman instantaneously, like a pistol-shot. Even though sympathy should give rise to inclinations at first sight, there is always a struggle, whose duration constitutes a blank in the sum total of conjugal infidelities: it would be an insult to the modesty of France, a country so naturally war-like too, to represent the duration of this struggle by no more than a twentieth of all wives. But we have to take into account that certain of the sick wives will keep their lovers even amid the medicine-bottles, also that there are pregnant wives whose condition will tickle the fancy of some sly celibate: these will balance a number of those still fighting for their virtue, and will acquit us of underestimating the force of modesty. Out of regard for the same, we do not venture to suggest that a wife deserted by her lover will find another *hic et nunc*; but this blank being necessarily less than the former, we shall estimate it at a fortieth.

These subtractions reduce our total to little more than eight hundred thousand wives, when it is a question of determining how many will commit a breach of conjugal faith. Before going farther let us ask, who would not like to believe that these women are all virtuous? Are they not the flower of the land? Are they not all in the spring of life, radiant with youth and beauty, with life and love? To believe in their virtue is a kind of social religion, for they are the ornament of the world, and the glory of France. It is in the bosom of this million that we have to discover—

THE NUMBER OF VIRTUOUS WOMEN;

THE NUMBER OF RESPECTABLE WOMEN.

This investigation, and the distinguishing of these two categories, require two entire Meditations, which shall serve as appendix to this one.

Meditation III: The Respectable Woman

MEDITATION III: THE RESPECTABLE WOMAN.

THE preceding meditation demonstrated that we possess in France a floating mass of a million women, exploiting the privilege of inspiring those passions, which a gallant man confesses without shame, or if he conceals them still rejoices in. It is therefore on this number that we must turn the lantern of Diogenes, in order to discover the respectable women of the country.

The quest leads us into certain digressions. Picture to yourself, Reader, two well-dressed young men, whose slim bodies and rounded arms resemble a pavior's beetle, and whose boots are the last word in elegance: they meet one morning on the boulevard, at the corner of the passage to the Panoramas.

"Ha! is that you?"

"Yes, old chap; a striking resemblance to myself, am I not?" And so they laugh and talk, more or less wittily, in the key of the opening pleasantry. Meanwhile they look one another over with the sly glance of a policeman looking for an identification mark. When each is satisfied of the freshness of the other's gloves and waistcoat, and of the style in which his cravat is tied; when they are almost certain that neither of them has fallen on bad times, then they link arms. And supposing they start from the Variety Theatre, they will not get as far as Frascati's without one or another putting the cheery question, which may be freely translated thus: "Well, whom do we marry to-day?" Safe to say, it will be some charming wife.

Where is the foot soldier of Paris, on whose ear there has not fallen, like bullets on the field of battle, fragments of sentences spoken by passers-by; and whose fancy has not seized on one of these chance utterances, these words frozen in air as Rabelais calls them? Unfortunately, most men walk about Paris much as they eat, much as they live, with their minds asleep. There are few active physiognomists, few musicians quick to recognise in what key these scattered notes are written, from what passion they proceed. Oh, to wander in Paris! Delicious pastime, adorable life! To saunter is a science, it is the gastronomy of the eye. To

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walk is to vegetate, to saunter is to live. The young and beautiful woman, long contemplated by ardent eyes, is in a stronger position to demand her price even than was that cook asking tenpence of the Limousin, whose nose, like a ship with all sails drawing, was inhaling savoury odours. To saunter is to cull fastidiously the flowers of the spirit, to look on at sublime scenes of misery, of joy, of love, to pass through galleries of portraits, comely and grotesque; it is to gaze into the depths of thousands of lives. In youth it is to desire all, and to possess in desiring; in age it is to live in the life of the young, to marry their passions. Now, how many answers has not an artistic saunterer heard given to the categoric question, at which our meditations have arrived?

"She is thirty-five, but you would not put her at more than twenty." The speaker was a young hot-head with eager eyes, just liberated from college, and wanting like Cherubin to embrace the world.

"What do you say to this? we have cambric dressing-gowns and hair-curlers set with diamonds!" says a lawyer's clerk.

"She has a carriage and a box at the Opera!" says an officer.

"Expense?" cries a somewhat older officer, as if he were meeting an attack, "it doesn't cost me a half-penny! With a figure like mine, you know! But where would you be, my worthy friend?" And the passer-by delivers a light pat on his companion's abdomen.

"Oh, she loves me!" says another, "you can't imagine how she loves me! but she has the greatest fool of a husband. Well—Buffon could describe the animals admirably, but the biped called husband . . .!" How pleasant to overhear when one is married!

"Like an angel, my dear fellow!" is the answer to a discreet whisper.

"Can you tell me her name or point her out to me?"—"Oh no! she's a respectable woman."

When a student is loved by a lemonade-seller, he names her with pride and takes his friends to breakfast with her. But if the same young man were loved by a woman whose husband dealt in articles of primary necessity, he would blush as he answered,

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"She is a draper's wife, or a stationer's, or a milliner's, or a tailor's, or a general dealer's." Still, the confession of a low-class love, sprouting and growing amid bales, it may be, of loaf-sugar, or of flannel, is always accompanied by a pompous eulogy of the lady's fortune. It is only the husband who meddles in trade, he is there to make the money and provide the fine furniture; meanwhile the well-beloved comes to her lover's rooms. She has a cashmere shawl, a villa in the country, etc. In short, our young man never lacks proofs that his mistress is on the point of becoming a respectable woman, if she is not one already.

This distinction is a product of our elegant manners, but the line is as hard to draw as that at which good society begins. How then are we to define a respectable woman? The matter touches so nearly the vanity of women, of their lovers, and sometimes even of their husbands, that we must lay down her certain general rules, the result of long observation. Our million privileged heads represent the number eligible for the glorious title of respectable woman, but not all attain thereto: the principles of election will be found in the following axioms.

APHORISMS.

I. A RESPECTABLE WOMAN IS ESSENTIALLY MARRIED.

II. A RESPECTABLE WOMAN IS UNDER FORTY YEARS OF AGE.

III. A MARRIED WOMAN WHOSE FAVOURS ARE PAID FOR IS NOT A RESPECTABLE WOMAN.

IV. A MARRIED WOMAN WHO HAS A CARRIAGE OF HER OWN IS A RESPECTABLE WOMAN.

V. A WOMAN WHO IS HER OWN COOK IS NOT A RESPECTABLE WOMAN.

VI. WHEN A MAN HAS AN INCOME OF TWENTY THOUSAND FRANCS A YEAR, HIS WIFE IS A RESPECTABLE WOMAN, WHATEVER SORT OF BUSINESS HE HAS MADE HIS MONEY IN.

VII. A WOMAN WHO SAYS *lettre d'échange* FOR *lettre de change*, *souyer* FOR *soulier*, *pierre de lierre* FOR *pieerre de liais*, WHO SAYS OF A MAN "*Est-il farce, monsieur an tel!*"—THIS WOMAN CAN NEVER BE A RESPECTABLE WOMAN, WHATEVER HER FORTUNE.

VIII. A RESPECTABLE WOMAN SHOULD HAVE A SUFFICIENTLY

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LUXURIOUS MODE OF LIFE, TO GIVE HER LOVER THE IMPRESSION THAT THE WILL NEVER COST HIM ANYTHING.

IX. A WOMAN IN A THIRD-FLOOR FLAT, UNLESS IT BE RUE DE RIVOLI OR RUE DE CASTIGLIONE, IS NOT A RESPECTABLE WOMAN.

X. THE WIFE OF A BANKER IS ALWAYS A RESPECTABLE WOMAN; BUT A WOMAN WHO SITS IN A COUNTING HOUSE CAN ONLY BE ONE IF HER HUSBAND'S TRADE IS VERY EXTENDED, AND IF HER HOME IS NOT OVER THE SHOP.

XI. THE UNMARRIED NIECE OF A BISHOP, PROVIDED ALSO THAT SHE LIVE WITH HIM, CAN PASS FOR A RESPECTABLE WOMAN, BECAUSE IF SHE HAS AN INTRIGUE SHE IS OBLIGED TO DECEIVE HER UNCLE.

XII. A RESPECTABLE WOMAN IS ONE WHOM YOU FEAR TO COMPROMISE.

XIII. THE WIFE OF AN ARTIST IS ALWAYS A RESPECTABLE WOMAN.

By applying these principles, a man from the department of l'Ardèche can resolve any difficulties that may arise in connexion with this subject. Observe, before a woman can have received a brilliant education, before she can be in a position to employ a cook while cultivating the arts of gallantry, before she can pass whole hours in a boudoir, reclining on a divan and living the life of the soul, she must have an income of at least six thousand francs in the provinces, or of twenty thousand in Paris. These two figures will be our test in reckoning the number of respectable women in the million, which was the rough product of our statistics.

Well, the sum total of the annuities, life-interests and perpetual pensions paid by the Treasury, as well as the interest paid on mortgages, if divided equally among three hundred thousand persons, could yield to each an income of fifteen hundred francs. The whole territorial wealth of the country, if divided equally among three hundred thousand land-owners, would yield to each an income of three thousand five hundred francs. Two hundred thousand bond-holders, receiving an average of fifteen hundred francs each, represent the charge on the national budget, as well as on those of the departments and municipalities; a charge met by increasing the debt, by drawing on Church funds

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and by further pinching the heroes at five sous per day, cutting down their allowance for clothes, for victuals, for accoutrements, etc. Two hundred thousand fortunes in trade, each of a capital value averaging not less than twenty thousand francs, include every possible establishment in France. There for you are husbands to the number of a round million.

But in this number, how many incomes shall we reckon of ten, fifty, a hundred, three, four, five and six hundred francs only, inscribed in the national ledger? How many land-owners who pay no more than a hundred sous, twenty francs, a hundred, two hundred, or two hundred and eighty francs in taxes? Among the Budgetophags, how many quill-drivers shall we reckon who have only six hundred francs as salary? How many business men, who have only fictitious capitals; who, rich in credit, have not a sou in hand, and resemble sieves through which the Pactolus passes; and how many merchants whose capital may be real, but does not exceed five thousand, four, three, two, or even one thousand francs? Oh industry, all hail!

Let us put the fortunate at more than they are perhaps, and make two halves of our million: on the one hand there will be five hundred thousand households with incomes ranging from a hundred to three thousand francs, and on the other hand five hundred thousand wives will qualify as respectable women. In accordance with the judgments which concluded our statistical Meditation, we are authorised to reduce this total by a hundred thousand units: thus it may be regarded as a proposition proved by mathematics, that there exist in France only four thousand women who can offer to fastidious men the rare and exquisite delights they seek in love.

Perhaps this would be an appropriate place to remind the adepts for whom we write, that love is not composed merely of a few persuasive talks and a more or less intelligent caress, followed by nights of pleasure, relieved in turn by days in which pride has its baptism of jealousy. Our four hundred thousand women are not the sort who gave rise to the saying, that the prettiest woman in the world can give no more than she has. No, they are richly dowered with treasures borrowed from our ardent imaginations, they know how to sell dearly what they do not possess, and so to compensate for the commonness of what they give indeed.

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In kissing the hand of a work-girl, will you feel any more pleasure or even as much, as in drinking up that five minutes' pleasure which every woman has to offer? Will the conversation of a shop-woman give you dreams of joy immeasurable? Know that between you and a woman your inferior, the gratifications of pride are for her alone; you are not in the secret of the happiness you give. On the other hand, between you and a woman your superior, whether in rank or in wealth, the gratifications of vanity are shared, and they are immense. No man has ever been able to raise his mistress to his own level; a woman always sees her lover as on a level with herself. "I can make princes, and you only bastards!" is an answer radiant with truth.

If love is the chief of the passions, it is because it flatters all the others. The degree of our love is measured by the number of chords in our heart, struck by the fingers of our beautiful lady. Biren, the goldsmith's son, ascending the bed of the Duchess of Courlande and helping her to sign the promise to him, that he should be proclaimed sovereign of the land as he was already of its young and beautiful queen, affords an example of that happiness which our four hundred thousand women can give to their lovers. To have the right of making a floor of all the heads which crowd a drawing-room, one must be the lover of one of these select ladies; and we all delight to lord it more or less.

It is against this brilliant section of the nation that all the attacks are directed of those men whose education, talent or wit, have won them credit for some portion in that human achievement, which is the glory of nations; and it is in this class alone that she is found, whose heart will be fought for to the death by such a husband as we are addressing.

What matter whether the ideas, to which we have been led by consideration of our feminine aristocracy, apply to the other social classes or not? If they are true of these women with their refinement of manners, language and thought, women in whom a privileged education has developed a taste for the arts, a capacity for feeling, comparing and reflecting; who have so delicate a sense of conduct, that they give to France her moral code;—if our ideas are true of these, then they will apply to women of the same class in all nations. The superior man to whom this book is dedicated possesses, without doubt, a mental optic, which will

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enable him to observe the clouding of the light in each successive class downwards, and to fix the stage of civilisation at which it is finally quenched.

But now is it not of high import to morals, that we discover the number of virtuous women among these adorable creatures? Is it not verily a marito-national question?

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IT is perhaps not so much a question how many virtuous women there are, as whether a respectable woman can possibly remain virtuous. To elucidate this important point, let us throw a rapid glance over the masculine population. From our fifteen million men let us eliminate at once the nine million bi-mana with thirty two vertebræ, admitting only six million subjects to our physiological analysis. It is true that a Marceau, a Masséna, a Rousseau, a Diderot or a Rollin is often generated spontaneously in these fermenting dregs of society; but here we are going deliberately to be guilty of inexactitudes. Never fear but this arbitrary exclusion of males will fall heavily on our heads at the conclusion, where its rectification will only present in a worse light the mechanism of public passions, and its terrible results shortly to be revealed to us.

From the six million privileged men we shall separate three million old men and children. Here it may be objected, that the subtraction from the women on this account left only two millions: the difference at first sight seems strange, but it is easy to justify. The average age at which women marry is twenty, and at forty they say farewell to love; whereas a lad of seventeen gives hearty whacks with his cane on parchment deeds, and particularly on the oldest, if gossiping memoirs are to be believed. Further, a man of fifty-two is more redoubtable then than at any age; he is the happy possessor, not only of all his patrimony, but also of a fund of experience dearly acquired. The passions which then inflame him being his last, he is pitiless as a man being carried away by a stream, who will snatch a tender branch of willow, spring's youngest shoot.

XIV. PHYSICALLY, A MAN IS LONGER MAN THAN A WOMAN IS WOMAN.

The difference in duration of the amorous life of the two sexes is about fifteen years, a fact that must be remembered in

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all considerations of marriage. This period is equal to three quarters of the time, during which a husband has to fear his wife's infidelity. Yet, comparing the number of women left by our subtraction with the number of men left, this difference is not more than a sixth of the whole number of either. Great is the modesty of our estimates! As to our reasons, they are so evident as to be commonplace, and have only been mentioned to forestall charges of unscientific procedure.

It must be clear now to every philosopher, even the least mathematical, that there exists in France a floating mass of three million men, of ages ranging from seventeen to fifty-two, all very much alive, furnished with good teeth and resolute to bite, and asking neither more nor less than to walk bold and free on the road to Paradise.

Our previous observations authorise us to separate from this mass a million husbands. Let us suppose for an instant that these are all happy and contented as our model husband, and so want nothing beyond conjugal love. Still, our mass of two million celibates needs not five sous income to make love; it is enough for a man to have a good foot, a good eye, to take a husband's portrait off its nail; he need not have a handsome face or be well made; provided a man has wit, a well-bred face and a share of tact, women will not ask him whence he comes or what are his intentions; the charms of youth are the sole baggage of love; a coat by Buisson and gloves by Boivin, elegant boots finished by the workman in fear and trembling, a cravat well tied,—with these a man may become the king of a drawing-room. And what of the military men? Although the craze for gold braid and epaulettes has rather gone out, officers still constitute a redoubtable legion of celibates. Not to speak of Eginhard, who had the advantage of being a private secretary, did not a newspaper lately report, that a German princess had left her fortune to a simple lieutenant of the imperial guards?

Then there is the village notary, in the depths of Gascony perhaps, who may draft only thirty-six deeds in the year, but sends his son to read for the Bar in Paris. Meanwhile the haberdasher wants his son to be a notary, the attorney destines his for the magistracy, the magistrate wants to be a minister and raise his children to the peerage. At no epoch of the world's history was

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there such a burning thirst for education. To-day it is no longer wit that flows in the streets, it is talent. Out of every crevice of our social state grow brilliant flowers, as on the walls of a ruin in spring-time; even in the cellars pallid shoots appear amid the vaultings, which a few rays from the sun of instruction will colour a lively green. As a result of this immense quickening of thought, this equal distribution of the fruitful light, differences of rank are almost lost, each man embodying the whole learning of his age. We are surrounded by living encyclopædias, who walk, think, act and aspire to immortality. Hence the shocks and alarms from soaring ambitions, from passions inordinate. We need other worlds, hives to receive all these swarms, and especially abundance of beautiful women.

Again, the illnesses that afflict a man produce no blank in the total amount of danger to husbands, for to our shame be it said, a woman is never so attached as when we suffer. Before this thought all the epigrams directed against the smaller sex—it is out of fashion to speak of the fair sex—lose their point, and should be changed into madrigals. All men should believe, that the sole virtue of woman is to love, and that all women are prodigiously virtuous; and believing this, should shut the book and be done with our meditations.

Yes! you surely remember that dark and bitter hour, when alone and suffering you accused all men, especially your friends; when weak and discouraged, you lay with your feverish head fretted by a hot pillow, even the white frill of the sheet pressing heavily on your skin, while your distended eyes wandered over the wall-paper of your silent room? you surely remember your door half opening then, and a fair young head framed in ringlets of gold appearing, like a star in a stormy sky? How she threw off the pretty hat, and ran to you smiling, half in grief and half in joy! And what were your first words?

“How did you manage it? what did you say to your husband?”

A husband! Here we are back in the middle of our subject.

XV. MORALLY ALSO, A MAN IS OFTENER AND LONGER MAN THAN A WOMAN IS WOMAN.

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However, we should take into consideration, that among these two million celibates there are some unfortunate wretches, in whom a deep sense of their own troubles and difficulties has quenched the flame of love. Also that not all of the two million have left college; and that there are a number of artisans and of lackeys—the Duke of Sévres, a little ugly man, was walking one day in the park of Versailles, when he saw some well-built lackeys: turning to his friends he said, “Look how we set off those rogues, and how they show us up!”—a number of speculative builders, besides business men of all sorts who think only of money, a number of shop-walkers, and so on without end. Also that there are some men too stupid, and certainly too ugly, to have been made by God; while there are others whose character is like an empty chestnut. Also that the clergy are generally chaste. Also that there are some so situated, as never to be able to enter the brilliant sphere in which respectable women move, whether from shyness or from want of a coat, or (it may be) for want of a bear-leader to introduce them.

But let us leave the reader to complete the number of exceptions from his own experience (for the first aim of a book should be to stimulate thought) and let us suppress at a stroke one half of the total, admitting only a million hearts as worthy to offer their homage to respectable women: it is roughly the number of our elect in each class. Women love only men of wit; but once more, let us give fair-play to virtue.

If you listen to any of our celibates he will recount a multitude of adventures, in all of which respectable women are gravely compromised. It would be a moderate estimate to allow three adventures to each celibate; but if some can claim a dozen or near it, there are so many who have limited themselves to two or three, or even to a single passion in life that (as in all our statistics) we have attempted to strike an average. Now multiply the number of celibates by the number of successes, and we get three million adventures; but to meet these we have only four hundred thousand respectable women!

If the God of mercy who looks down on the world does not send humanity to the wash again, it can only be because his last deluge had so little success! Well, such is a nation! there for you is society passed through a sieve, make what you can of the result.

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XVI. MORALS ARE THE HYPOCRISY OF NATIONS; HYPOCRISY IS IN SOME PLACES MORE PERFECTED AND IN OTHERS LESS.

XVII. VIRTUE IS ONLY PERHAPS THE POLITENESS OF THE SOUL.

Physical love is a need of the same kind as hunger, only that man eats always, whereas in love his appetite is not so regular or sustained. A morsel of brown bread and a pitcher of water tame the hunger of any man, but our civilisation has created gastronomy. Love has its morsel of bread, but it has also a science of its own, which we call gallantry, unless we borrow the charming word *coquetterie* from the French, among whom this science took rise. Ah! is it not something to make all husbands shudder, if they reflect on the innate need in man to change his diet, and how in whatever savage country travellers have visited, they have found fermented liquors and savoury dishes? Yet hunger is not so violent as love; the caprices of the heart are much more numerous, more impelling, more unaccountable in their fury, than any of the caprices that gave rise to gastronomy. All that poetry and history have revealed to us of human love show our celibates armed with a terrible power; they are the lions of the Gospel, seeking whom they may devour. Let the reader examine his own conscience, let him call up all his memories, and then say if he has ever known a man who confined himself to the love of one woman!

Alas! how are we to solve, to the honour of all peoples, the problem of the three million burning passions, that find only four hundred thousand women as fuel? Shall we distribute four celibates to every woman, and suppose that respectable women have been able to establish, by unconscious instinct, a sort of rotation of celibates among themselves, similar to that devised by the presidents of royal courts, for passing ministers through each office successively at regular intervals of years? That were a sorry way of clearing up the difficulty! Shall we conjecture that certain respectable women, in the apportioning of celibates, play the part of the lion in the fable? What! half at least of our altars would be whited sepulchres! Then for the honour of French women, shall we suppose that in times of peace other countries, notably England, Germany and Russia, export to us a certain number of their respectable women? But the nations of Europe

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will want to balance accounts, by claiming that France exports a certain number of beautiful women to *them*.

Religion and morals suffer so much by these explanations, that an honest man, in his desire to absolve married women, would find it preferable to believe that half of the dowagers and of the girls in their teens share in the general corruption, or better still that the celibates are liars. But we are forgetting! think of our husbands, who to the discredit of morals, conduct themselves almost as celibates, glorying, *in petto*, in their secret adventures. Oh! then we must believe that every married man, if he pays some regard to his wife on the score of honour, as Corneille would have said in his old age, knows where to find a rope and a nail : *foenum habet in cornu*.

Be that as it may, it is in the bosom of these four hundred thousand respectable women, that lantern in hand, we must seek the virtuous women of France; for in our conjugal statistics, we have only eliminated such creatures as society is not concerned with. Is it not a fact that in France respectable people, gentlefolk, number together hardly three millions; our million celibates, half a million respectable women, half a million husbands, and a million composed of dowagers, infants and girls in their teens? Are you astonished now at the verse of Boileau, in which the inspired poet goes direct to the conclusion, worked out mathematically before your eyes in these trying meditations, and declares it to be no hyperbole?

However, there do exist some virtuous women. Yes! those who have never been tempted, and those who die in their first confinement, that is, supposing they came virgins to their husbands. Yes, and those who are as ugly as Kaïfakatadary in the Arabian Nights; and those whom Mirabeau calls cucumber-fairies, being composed of atoms exactly similar to those of the roots of strawberry plants or of water-lilies . . . You would think these might be trusted, but don't let us be too sure!

Anyhow we may claim, for the credit of the age, that since the restoration of religion and morals, and while the fashion lasts, one meets scattered about some women so religious, so wrapped up in their duties, so upright and so regular, so rigid in virtue, so this and that, that the devil would hardly dare look at them! They are buttressed by rosaries, books of hours, and spiritual directors. . . Tut tut!

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We do not suggest there are any women virtuous from stupidity, it is recognised that in love all women are quick-witted. It is not impossible, however, that in some corner there are young and pretty women, who are virtuous without the world suspecting it. Only don't give the name of virtuous woman to one, who in combating an involuntary passion, grants nothing to a lover whom she idolises to despair: it is the cruellest injury that can be done to a loving husband. What remains to him of his wife? a nameless thing, an animated corpse! In their very pleasures his wife will be like that guest warned by Borgia in the midst of a banquet, that some of the dishes are poisoned; his appetite failed, he nibbled with his front teeth, making a pretence of eating. How he regretted the meal he had left for that of the terrible cardinal, and sighed for the moment when the feast would end and he could rise from the table!

What now is the result of this scrutiny of female virtue? Here it is in five maxims, of which the two last are borrowed from an eclectic philosopher of the eighteenth century.

XVIII. A VIRTUOUS WOMAN HAS IN HER HEART EITHER A CORD LESS OR A CORD MORE THAN OTHER WOMEN; SHE IS STUPID OR SHE IS SUBLIME.

XIX. VIRTUE IN WOMEN IS PERHAPS A QUESTION OF TEMPERAMENT.

XX. THE MOST VIRTUOUS WOMAN CONTAINS AN ELEMENT THAT IS NEVER CHASTE.

XXI. "THAT A MAN OF INTELLIGENCE BE IN DOUBT ABOUT HIS MISTRESS, IS CONCEIVABLE; BUT ABOUT HIS WIFE!—HE WOULD HAVE TO BE TOO STUPID."

XXII. "MEN WOULD BE TOO UNHAPPY IF THEY REMEMBERED IN THE COMPANY OF WOMEN THE LEAST PART OF WHAT THEY KNOW BY HEART."

The number of exceptional women, who like the virgins in the parable have kept their lamps lit, will be always too wretchedly small for the champions of virtue, the apostles of optimism; and if it is some consolation to have even this number to subtract from the total of respectable women, the danger to husbands is

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only rendered the greater, the scandal more terrible for the remainder of legitimate wives. What husband now can sleep at ease beside a young and beautiful wife, having learnt that three celibates at least are on the watch; that if they have not as yet made havoc in his little property, they regard the husband as their rightful prey, who sooner or later will fall to them, whether by force or guile, or it may be through voluntary surrender? For it is impossible that they shall not be one day victorious in this strife. Oh, terrifying conclusion!

Here we shall be accused perhaps by the moral purists, and by the strait-laced generally, of taking too desperate a view; they will spring to the defence, either of the respectable women or of the celibates: but we have reserved for them a last consideration. Add what you like to the number of respectable women, and reduce at the same time the number of celibates: you will still find more gallant adventurers than respectable women, you will still find a mass of celibates forced by our morals into three sorts of crimes. If they remain chaste, their health will be impaired by the nervous irritation, till they go and die of consumption on a Swiss mountain, drinking milk in melancholy before the sublimest spectacles of nature. If they yield to legitimate temptations, either they compromise respectable women, and so we are brought back to the subject of this book, or they descend to purchasing the vile favours of the half million women, described in the last category of the first Meditation; and in this latter case, they will be lucky to end in Switzerland drinking milk!

Have you never been struck by a defect in the organisation of our society? the mention of it will serve as moral evidence of our last results. The average age at which a man marries is thirty; the average age at which his passions develop, and desire for the pleasures of reproduction is strongest, is twenty. So during those ten fair years, the green season of his life, when youth and beauty and vivacity make him the most dangerous to husbands, he remains without *legal* means of satisfying the imperious demand in him for love, a demand that runs through his whole being. This period being a sixth of the life of man, we have to admit that a sixth at least of our male population, and the most vigorous sixth at that, is perpetually in a condition as exhausting for them as it is dangerous for society.

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"Why do they not marry?" cries a pious lady.

But what sensible father would think of marrying his son at twenty? the danger of these precocious unions is too well-known. It seems that marriage is the opposite of all natural acts, since it demands a special maturity of reason. Everyone knows the saying of Rousseau: "There must always be a period of license, at one age if not at another; a leaven is only bad which ferments too soon or too late." And what mother would risk her daughter's happiness by exposing her to the risk of this fermentation, when it is not past and over? Enough! what need to justify a fact by which all societies are ruled? Is there not in every country, as we have demonstrated of France, an immense mass of men, who live very respectably without being either married or single?

"Cannot these men," says our pious lady again, "live continent like the clergy?"

Agreed, madam, the clergy live so. But we would have you remember, that the vow of chastity is one of the most violent inhibitions of nature, among all necessitated by society; that continence is the special feature of the priest's profession; that he has to be chaste in the same way that a physician is insensible to bodily ills, as the notary and the attorney are to the misery giving rise to their cases, as the soldier is to the death which surrounds him on the field of battle. If the needs of civilisation ossify certain fibres of the heart, and make callous certain membranes of the brain, we must not conclude from this fact that all men are bound to undergo these partial and specific deaths of the soul; that would lead the human race to a moral suicide, most execrable.

Only picture to yourself, in the most Jansenist of drawing-rooms, a young man (say) of twenty-eight appearing, who has guarded as a treasure his robe of innocence, who is as virgin as the grouse that epicures feast on: can you not see the most austere virtuous wife addressing to him some biting compliment on his virtue, the severest magistrate that ever mounted the bench tossing his head and smiling, and all the young women gathering in corners not to let him hear their tittering? And when the elusive hero leaves the room, what a shower of pleasantries falls on his innocent head! Nay, more, what insults! For what is more discredited in France than impotence, cold-bloodedness, lack of all passion, imbecility? The only king of France who

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would not have choked with laughter was perhaps Louis XIII: his green-gallant of a father would probably have banished such a fellow, either on a charge of not being a Frenchman, or of being a dangerous example!

What a strange contradiction! A young man is blamed no less if he pass his life "in holy territory," to borrow an expression from bachelor life. Is it perhaps for the benefit of respectable women, that magistrates and heads of police have always ordered that brothels shall not open before night-fall and shall close at eleven o'clock? Where are our army of celibates to sow their wild oats? And who is deceived about this? as Figaro asks; is it the governed or the governors? Society is like little boys stopping their ears at a sham battle, not to hear the gun-shots. Are we afraid of probing our wound? Or is it recognised that the evil is incurable, and that things must go their way? Here is a problem for legislators, for there is no escape from the social and material dilemma, resulting from this deficit of public virtue in regard to marriage.

It is not our business to solve the problem; all the same let us suppose for a moment, that in order to save so many homes, so many wives, so many respectable spinsters, society should find itself obliged to license certain tender hearts to give relief to the celibates: would not our laws then have to incorporate in a guild these female Decii, who, devoting themselves for the Republic, should make a rampart of their bodies before respectable homes? Legislators have been very wrong, in disdaining hitherto to establish the rights of courtesans.

XXIII. THE COURTESAN IS AN INSTITUTION, IF SHE MEETS A NEED.

The question bristles with so many *ifs* and *buts*, that we bequeath it to our grand-children; something must be left for them to do! Besides, it is only incidental in this work; for to-day, more than in any age, sensibility is developed; and just because it is so generally felt that pleasure comes from the heart, the standard of morals was never so high. What man of sentiment, in presence of four hundred thousand young and beautiful women, adorned with the splendours of wealth and the graces of intellect, rich in the

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treasures of gallantry, and waiting only to give happiness, would turn to . . . Oh, fie! But let us state briefly and clearly, for the benefit of future legislators, the outcome of recent years.

XXIV. IN THE SOCIAL ORDER THE INEVITABLE ABUSES ARE LAWS OF NATURE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHICH MAN OUGHT TO FRAME HIS POLITICAL CODES.

XXV. "ADULTERY IS A BANKRUPTCY WITH THIS DIFFERENCE," SAID CHAMFORT, "THAT IT IS THE CREDITOR WHO IS DISGRACED."

In France the laws both of adultery and bankruptcy are greatly in need of modification. Are they too mild? Do they err in principle? *Caveant consules!*

Well, courageous athlete! you who took to yourself the little apostrophe, which in the first meditation we addressed to those charged with a wife, what do you think of it all? May we hope that this rapid survey gives you no tremors, that you are not a man whose spinal marrow dries up or whose nervous fluid freezes at sight of a precipice or of a boa constrictor? Come, my friend! who has land has war; but the men who desire your money are much more numerous than those who desire your wife.

After all, husbands are free to take these calculations for mere trifling, or this trifling for mere calculations. What is so beautiful in life as its illusions, what so venerable as our most futile beliefs? There are plenty of men whose principles are only prejudices, and who, lacking the power to form their own conceptions of virtue or happiness, accept one ready-made from the hands of legislators. But we are only addressing those Manfreds, who from lifting up too many skirts are tormented by a sort of moral spleen, to which they would give vent: for them the position is boldly stated, they know now the extent of the evil.

It remains to examine the chances which generally may be encountered in the marriage of every man, and will be against our champion in the combat, from which we would have him issue victorious.

Meditation V: The Predestined

MEDITATION V: THE PREDESTINED.

PREDESTINED means destined in advance, either for happiness or for sorrow. Theology has appropriated this word and used it to designate the blessed; we for our part give to the term a significance fatal to our elect, of whom we may reverse the saying of the Gospel thus: "Many are called and many are chosen."

Experience shows that certain classes of men are more liable than others to certain failings; thus the Gascon cannot help exaggerating, or the Parisian being vain. Again, apoplexy is seen to attack the short-necked, anthrax (a sort of plague) to fall for preference on butchers, gout on the rich, health on the poor, deafness on kings, paralysis on administrators; and in the same way it may be observed, that certain classes of husbands are most often victims of illegitimate passions. These husbands and their wives almost monopolise the celibates; they form a kind of aristocracy. If any reader should find himself in one of the aristocratic classes to be described, we hope he will have the presence of mind, he or his wife, to recall instantly the favourite maxim of Lhomond's Latin Grammar, "No rule without exceptions." A friend of the house might even quote the saying, "Present company always excepted." Then husband and wife will have, *in petto*, the right to believe themselves each an exception. But our duty, the interest we take in husbands, and our desire to save so many young and beautiful women from the various misfortunes which a lover always brings in his train, oblige us to indicate in order such husbands as ought to be especially on guard.

The first in this catalogue will be all husbands whose business or functions drive them from home at set hours, and for a set time; these are the standard-bearers of the brotherhood. Among them we shall specify the magistrates, both temporary and permanent, obliged to remain at the Courts during a great part of the day: other functionaries find means sometimes to leave their desks, but a judge or a crown-solicitor, seated on the lilies, must die (so to speak) while there are cases to be heard; his field of

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battle is there. In a like case are members of Parliament and legislative peers, ministers in attendance on the king, secretaries in attendance on the ministers, soldiers on active service, and lastly the corporal on patrol, as is shown by Lafleur's letter in the *Sentimental Journey*.

After the gentlemen forced to absent themselves from home at fixed hours, march those so occupied with serious and mighty works, that they have not a minute in which to be amiable; their brows are always knit, their demeanour rarely gay. At the head of this legion of the incornifistibulated we shall place the bankers, labouring to transfer millions; whose heads are so crammed with calculations, that the figures at last pierce the cranium, and rise in twin columns of addition above the forehead. These millionaires, forgetful of the sacred laws of marriage and of the care due to the tender flower they have to cultivate, never think of watering it, or of protecting it from heat or cold. They are hardly aware that a wife's happiness has been entrusted to them; only at table are they reminded for a moment, on seeing before them a woman richly adorned; or else before their strong-box, when the charmer, fearing their brutal reproaches, comes gracious as Venus to relieve them of some money. Oh! and then in the evening, they have sometimes a quite vivid recollection of the rights specified to a husband in article 213 of the Civil Code; rights which the wife recognises, but as with the heavy duties on foreign imports, in paying what the law requires she consoles herself with the proverb, "No pleasure without a little pain."

The professors who spend whole months in picking the bone of an antediluvian beast, in spying into the secrets of nature to discover her laws; the Greeks and the Latins, who dine on a thought of Tacitus, sup on a phrase of Thucydides, spend their lives in wiping the dust off shelves of books, or in chasing a marginal note on a papyrus: these are all predestined. Nothing that passes round them strikes them, so complete is their absorption, so great their ecstasy; their undoing might be consummated at high noon, and they would hardly see it! Happy souls, oh, a thousand times happy! Beauzée is the classic example, who returning home after a meeting of the Academy, surprised his wife with a German: "When I informed you, Madam, that I have to go . . ." exclaimed

Meditation V: The Predestined

the stranger.—“Please, Sir, say ‘that I *had* to go,’” interrupts the Academician.

Next come, lyre in hand, a company of poets, whose animal forces have left the reception-hall for the upper storey. Knowing better how to mount Pegasus than the mare of old Peter, they rarely marry, accustomed as they are to loose their fury at intervals upon some wandering (if not imaginary) Chloris. Then the men whose faces are smeared with snuff, and those who had the misfortune to be born with a perpetually running nose; then the sailors who smoke and chew; then the gentleman whose dry and bilious disposition gives him the look of having always just eaten a sour apple; then the men who in private life have some disgusting or absurd habit, and who never look clean whatever they may do; then the husbands who get the discreditable name of bed-warmer; and finally the dotards who marry young women: all these are essentially predestined.

There is a last class of the predestined, whose downfall is almost as certain. We mean the naggers and fussers, the tyrannical busy-bodies, with impossible ideas of domestic authority; they openly speak ill of women, and have no more understanding of life than a cockchafer has of natural history. When such men marry, their households would remind one of a wasp fluttering on a window-pane after a school-boy has taken off its head. To this class of predestinates our book will be so much Greek; we no more write for such imbeciles, walking statues that ought to be stuck on a cathedral, than for the old pumps at Marly, which can no longer raise water into the groves of Versailles without being in danger of sudden dissolution.

I seldom observe in drawing-rooms the conjugal curiosities with which they are swarming, without being reminded of a spectacle I had the good fortune to witness in my youth. In 1819 I had a cottage in the delicious valley of L’Isle-Adam. My hermitage was on the edge of Cassan Park, a mild retreat in summer or winter, and the most gorgeous to look on, the most enticing to walk in, of all that art and luxury have ever created. We owe this green domain to a farmer-general of the good old times, a man celebrated for his eccentricity, by name Bergeret; who among other Heliogaberies used to go to the Opera with powdered gold on his hair, and who would illuminate his park for himself

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alone, or give himself a sumptuous banquet. This middle-class Sardanapalus returned from Italy with such a passion for the landscapes of that beautiful country, that in a burst of fanaticism he spent four or five million in having copied in his park the views he had in his portfolio. The most ravishing oppositions of foliage, long valleys planted with the rarest of trees, the most picturesque vistas from abroad, the Borromean Isles floating on clear and fantastic waters,—these were so many rays bringing their optic treasures to a single centre, an *isola bella* whence the eye as by enchantment might contemplate each detail at its ease; an isle in whose bosom was a little house, hidden under the plumes of some century-old willows; an isle bordered with yellow water-flags and flowering reeds, like an emerald set in gold.

It is a place to flee a thousand leagues from! The most sickly, the most melancholy, the most dried-up of our ailing men of genius would there find such contentment, he would die at the end of a fortnight of fatty degeneration of the soul, weighed down by the succulent riches of a vegetative life! The original owner of this Eden, passing listless days in its midst, became suddenly enamoured of a great monkey, perhaps for lack of a child or wife. Or it may have been that he had had all he wanted of the human species, having been loved formerly by an Empress, so it is said. An elegant lantern of wood, mounted on a carved column, served as habitation for the malicious beast. Being kept on a chain, and rarely caressed by his capricious master, who was more often in Paris than on his estate, he had acquired a very bad reputation. I remember seeing him, in the presence of some ladies, become almost as insolent as a man might. The owner was obliged to kill him, as he was always growing wickeder.

One morning I was sitting under a beautiful tulip-tree then in flower, occupied in doing nothing, unless inhaling the amorous perfumes, which some tall poplars hindered from leaving this beautiful precinct; anon I would relish the silence of the woods, or lend my ear to the murmur of a stream or the rustling of the leaves above me. I was just admiring the blue fret-work, which was being carried out above my head by clouds of gold and mother-o'-pearl, and sauntering the while in my future life, when I heard an abominable noise; some oaf lately arrived from Paris had begun to play the violin furiously. I could not wish my worst

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enemy to suffer as I did, in this violation of the sublime harmony of nature. If the distant notes of the horn of Roland had been wafted on the air, well perhaps . . . but a screeching string, that pretended to convey to you human ideas and phrases!

This Amphion, who had been marching up and down the dining-room, now sat down on a window-seat, exactly opposite the monkey; perhaps he wanted an audience. Suddenly I saw the animal climb down from his little prison, and planting himself on his hind feet, stand with his head on one side like a swimmer and his arms crossed on his breast,—much as the chained Spartacus might have stood, or Catiline listening to Cicero. Presently the player, summoned by a sweet voice, whose silvery tone awoke the echoes of a boudoir known to me, put down the violin on the window-seat, and disappeared like a swallow joining his mate with swift horizontal flight. The great monkey, whose chain was long enough to reach the window, gravely took up the violin.

I know not if you have had, as I, the pleasure of seeing a monkey study music; but even now, when I no longer laugh as in those careless days, I never think of my monkey without smiling. The half-man began by gripping the instrument with his palm, and smelling it as if it had been an apple he was about to bite. The breath of his nose was probably enough to draw from the sonorous wood a low harmony, for the orang-outang threw back his head, turned the fiddle over and over, raised it and lowered it, stood it on end, shook it, put it to his ear, threw it down and took it up again, all with a rapid unexpectedness of movement such as belongs only to the animals. He questioned the dumb wood with an unreasoned sagacity, which was somehow the more marvellous for its deficiency. At last, holding it by the finger-board, he made a grotesque attempt to put the violin under his chin; but like a spoilt child, he soon tired of a game demanding long practice, and began to pluck at the strings discordantly. He became angry then, placed the violin on the window-seat and seizing the bow, began to work it backwards and forwards over the strings, like a mason sawing a stone. By this new experiment he only succeeded in offending his fastidious ear; so taking the bow in both hands, he began to rain blows on the innocent fiddle, that might have been a source of harmony and pleasure. I seemed to see a schoolboy holding another face downwards, and treating

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him to a furious thumping to cure him of some slackness. The violin having been judged and condemned, the monkey sat on the remains, and took a stupid pleasure in tangling the white hairs of the broken bow.

Never since that day have I been able to see the household of a predestinate, without comparing the majority of husbands to that orang-outang trying to play the violin. Love is the most melodious of all music, and a taste for it is inborn in us. Woman is a delightful instrument of pleasure, but it is necessary to know her trembling cords, the attitude in which to approach her, and the difficult changes of fingering needed for so delicate a keyboard. How many oranges—men, I mean—marry without knowing what a woman is! How many predestinates have proceeded with her like the monkey of Cassan with his violin! They have broken the heart they did not understand, have mishandled and tarnished the gem of whose value they were ignorant. Children all their lives, they pass out of life as poor as they came into it, having vegetated only; they talk much of love and sensation, of virtue and license, but only as slaves talk of liberty. Almost all married in the most profound ignorance, both of women and of love; they began by forcing the door of a strange house, and they expect to be well-received in the drawing-room. But the least sensitive of artists knows that there exists between him and his instrument, thing of wood or ivory as it is, an indefinable friendship. And he knows by hard experience, that years were needed to establish this mysterious understanding between inert matter and himself; he did not guess at the first encounter its resources and caprices, its failings and its virtues. Only after long study does an instrument reveal its soul, and utter music of its own; they two only come to know each other as friends after much earnest questioning.

Is it likely that a man, who spends his life squatting like a monk in a cell, should learn to know woman, and how to interpret this elaborate solfeggio? Can a man do so whose thoughts are always occupied elsewhere, in judging or governing strangers, in obtaining the money of strangers, in feeding, in healing, in wounding strangers? But is it possible for all our predestinates to employ all their time in studying a woman? They sell their time, how can they give it to happiness? Money is their god;

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one cannot serve two masters at once. And so the world is full of young women dragging themselves about, pale and feeble, sick and suffering. Some are a prey to inflammations, more or less serious, others remain the pitiful victims of nervous attacks, more or less violent. All the husbands of these women are ignoramuses, and all are predestined. They have prepared their own calamity with as much care as an artist-husband devotes to cultivating the late-blooming, and most exquisite, flowers of pleasure. The time spent by a fool in consummating his ruin is exactly that spent by a man of sense in the cultivation of his happiness.

XXVI. NEVER BEGIN MARRIAGE BY AN ASSAULT.

In the preceding meditations we have exposed the extent of the evil with the audacity and with the impartiality of a surgeon, boldly laying back the false tissues that conceal a festering wound. Public virtue, dissected on the table of our theatre, is not even left by the scalpel a recognisable corpse. Lover or husband, have you smiled or shuddered at the evil? Well, we now take a malicious pleasure in shifting this immense social burden on to the conscience of the predestined. Harlequin trying if his horse can be trained not to eat is less ridiculous than those men, who think to find happiness in marriage without cultivating it sedulously. The faults of women are so many accusations against the egotism and indifference of men, in short, their nullity as husbands. It is for you, Reader, who have often condemned your own crime in another's, to weigh yourself now in the balance. One of the trays is already filled, see what you have to put in the other side! Reckon up the number of predestinates, who are to be found in the sum total of married men; throw them in the balance and watch the pointer. You will soon know on which side is the evil.

Let us try to penetrate further into the causes of this conjugal malady. To apply the word *love* to the reproduction of the species is the most damnable blasphemy that the morals of our time have produced: nature, in raising us above the beasts by the divine gift of thought, fitted us to experience sentiments as well as sensations, tastes as well as appetites. Thus man is a two-fold creation, combining the animal with the lover; and it is by the

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analysis of this duality, and the scientific distinction of its elements, that we hope to throw light on the social problem confronting us.

Marriage may be considered politically, judicially or morally; as a law, as a contract or as a duty. The law provides for the reproduction of the species, the contract for the transmission of property, the duty for the security of all men who shall have children, as they themselves had parents. Here are reasons enough to make marriage an object of general respect; though society, naturally enough, has only been able to consider the conjugal question in its social aspect. The majority have only seen in marriage the interests of reproduction, of property or of the children; but none of these constitutes happiness. In the *Crescite et multiplicamini* of the Old Testament, there is no implication of love. To ask a young woman, whom one has known for a fortnight and seen fourteen times, for love according to the king and his judges, for love within the meaning of the act,—ha! it is an absurdity worthy of the predestined.

Love is appetite and taste in agreement, a happy marriage is the result of perfect understanding between two souls. It follows that, to be happy, a man must subject himself to certain delicate rules of honour. While enjoying the benefit of a social law sanctifying lust, he ought to obey those un-written laws of nature, by which the tender sentiment flowers. If he puts his happiness in being loved, he himself must love sincerely: nothing can resist a true passion.

—But to love passionately is to desire always: can a man desire his wife always?

Yes! It is as absurd to pretend that it is impossible to love the same woman always, as to say that a great artist needs several violins to execute a piece of music to perfection. What is love but the music of the senses? It brings out all that is great in man, all his most intellectual qualities. Either it is sublime, or it is not present. When love exists, it exists for ever, and is always growing. Such is that love which the ancients made the child of Heaven and of Earth.

All literature turns on seven situations; music never uses but seven notes, nor painting but seven colours. Like these three arts, love could be reduced to seven principles; but we must leave the inquiry to the next generation. This we can safely assert,

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that if poetry, music and painting are infinite in expression, much more must love be so; for in the three arts we have quoted (perhaps unconvincingly) to illustrate our case, man is alone with his imagination, while in love there is an alliance of two bodies and two souls. Again, if the three chief modes of expression require preliminary study, even by those whom nature has created poets, musicians or painters, is it not obvious, that before happiness can be attained, there must be a like initiation into the art of love? All men feel the impulse to reproduce, as they feel hunger and thirst; but not all are called to be lovers or epicures. Our civilisation has recognised that the sense of taste needs to be cultivated, and that to know how to eat and drink belongs to a privileged few: but the pleasure of love is not considered as an art, it still awaits its physiologist. For our part, we shall be content to have demonstrated that one cause alone would account for the misfortunes of the predestined, namely their ignorance of the chief constituents of happiness.

It is with the greatest diffidence that we venture now to offer a few aphorisms, to serve as the basis of this new art, as did certain plaster casts for geology. We leave them to the meditation of philosophers, of young people about to marry and of the predestined.

CONJUGAL CATECHISM.

XXVII. MARRIAGE IS A SCIENCE.

XXVIII. A MAN IS NOT QUALIFIED TO MARRY WHO HAS NOT CARRIED HIS STUDIES IN ANATOMY AT LEAST SO FAR AS TO HAVE DISSECTED A WOMAN.

XXIX. THE FATE OF A MARRIAGE IS DECIDED IN THE FIRST NIGHT.

XXX. A WIFE DEPRIVED OF HER FREE-WILL CAN NEVER HAVE THE MERIT OF MAKING A SACRIFICE.

XXXI. IN LOVE, APART FROM ANY QUESTION OF THE SOUL, THE WOMAN IS AS IT WERE A LYRE, WHICH ONLY YIELDS UP ITS SECRETS TO A SKILLED PLAYER.

XXXII. INDEPENDENT OF PERSONAL REPULSION, THERE IS A DELICACY IN THE SOUL OF EVERY WOMAN, WHICH SOONER OR LATER WILL TURN FROM PLEASURES UNSANCTIFIED BY PASSION.

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XXXIII. A HUSBAND'S OWN INTEREST, AT LEAST AS MUCH AS HIS HONOUR, FORBIDS HIM THE INDULGENCE OF ANY PLEASURE, WHICH HE HAS NOT HAD THE TALENT TO MAKE ATTRACTIVE TO HIS WIFE.

XXXIV. THE PLEASURES OF LOVE BEING PRODUCED BY AN ALLIANCE OF SENSATION AND SENTIMENT, SUCH PLEASURES MAY BOLDLY BE DEFINED AS A KIND OF MATERIAL IDEA.

XXXV. AS THE COMBINATIONS OF IDEAS ARE INFINITE, SO IT MUST BE WITH THE PLEASURES OF LOVE.

XXXVI. THERE ARE NOT TO BE FOUND IN THE LIFE OF A MAN TWO MOMENTS OF IDENTICAL PLEASURE, ANY MORE THAN THERE ARE TO BE FOUND ON A TREE TWO LEAVES EXACTLY ALIKE.

XXXVII. IF THERE EXIST DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ONE DAY'S PLEASURE AND ANOTHER'S, A MAN CAN ALWAYS BE HAPPY WITH THE SAME WOMAN.

XXXVIII. TO APPRECIATE THE FINE SHADES OF PLEASURE, TO DEVELOP THEM, TO GIVE THEM NEW FORM, TO MAKE THEM ALWAYS AN ORIGINAL EXPRESSION,—THIS CONSTITUTES THE ART OF MARRIAGE, IN THIS IS SHOWN THE GENIUS OF A HUSBAND.

XXXIX. WHEN THERE IS NO LOVE IN THE UNION, SUCH ART BECOMES MERE LICENSE; BUT IN LOVE'S TEMPLE NO CARESS IS TO BE CALLED LASCIVIOUS.

XL. THE CHASTEST OF WIVES CAN ALSO BE THE MOST VOLUPTUOUS.

XLI. THE MOST VIRTUOUS WOMAN MAY BE, WITHOUT KNOWING IT, THE MOST INDECENT.

XLII. WHEN TWO BEINGS ARE UNITED IN THE PLEASURES OF LOVE, ALL SOCIAL CONVENTIONS ARE FORGOTTEN: BUT THIS SITUATION HIDES A ROCK ON WHICH MANY VESSELS HAVE BEEN WRECKED. A HUSBAND IS LOST IF HE ONCE FORGETS, THAT THERE IS A NATURAL MODESTY IN WOMAN, WHICH AT CERTAIN MOMENTS MAY ALLOW ALL VEILS TO BE THROWN ASIDE, BUT AT OTHERS WILL WANT TO REPLACE THE CIRCLER ON HER BROW.

XLIII. POTENCY CONSISTS, NOT IN STRIKING HARD AND OFTEN, BUT IN STRIKING IN SEASON.

XLIV. TO BRING TO BIRTH A DESIRE, TO NOURISH IT, TO

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EDUCATE IT, TO STRENGTHEN IT, TO PROVOKE AND TO SATISFY IT
THIS IS A POEM IN ITSELF.

XLV. THE ORDER OF THE PLEASURES IS FROM THE COUPLET
TO THE QUATRAIN, FROM THE QUATRAIN TO THE SONNET, FROM
THE SONNET TO THE BALLAD, FROM THE BALLAD TO THE ODE, FROM
THE ODE TO THE CANTO, FROM THE CANTO TO THE DITHYRAMB:
THE HUSBAND WHO BEGINS WITH THE DITHYRAMB IS A BLUNDERER.

XLVI. EACH NIGHT SHOULD HAVE ITS MENU.

XLVII. THERE IS A DEVOURING MONSTER THAT MARRIAGE
SHOULD INCESSANTLY COMBAT, ITS NAME IS HABIT.

XLVIII. IF A MAN CANNOT MAKE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
THE PLEASURES OF TWO SUCCESSIVE NIGHTS, HE HAS MARRIED TOO
SOON.

XLIX. THE LOVER'S PART IS EASIER THAN THE HUSBAND'S,
INASMUCH AS IT IS EASIER TO MAKE PRETTY SPEECHES NOW AND THEN,
THAN TO BE ENTERTAINING ALL THE TIME.

L. A HUSBAND SHOULD NEVER GO TO SLEEP THE FIRST, NOR
WAKE UP THE LAST.

LI. A MAN WHO ENTERS HIS WIFE'S DRESSING-ROOM IS EITHER
AN IMBECILE OR A PHILOSOPHER.

LII. A HUSBAND WHO HOLDS BACK NOTHING IS A LOST MAN.

LIII. YOUR WIFE IS A SLAVE, WHOM YOU MUST KNOW HOW
TO SET ON A THRONE.

LIV. LET NONE FLATTER HIMSELF THAT HE KNOWS HIS WIFE
AND IS MAKING HER HAPPY, BUT WHEN HE SEES HER OFTEN ON HER
KNEES.

It was to all the ignorant troop of our predestined, to our
legion of smokers and snuff-takers, of wheezers and scolders and
dotards, that Sterne addressed the letter in *Tristram Shandy*,
written to "my uncle Toby" by his brother Walter, when the
former was proposing to marry the widow Wadman. As the
famous advice, embodied by the most original of English writers
in this powerful letter, will serve very nearly to complete our
observations on the mode of behaviour towards wives, we shall
give it in full for the benefit of the predestined, begging them to

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study and meditate on it, as one of the most substantial masterpieces of the human intellect.

Letter from Mr. Shandy to Captain Toby Shandy.

My Dear Brother *Toby*,

What I am going to say to thee is upon the nature of women, and of love-making to them; and perhaps it is well for thee—tho' not so well for me—that thou hast occasion for a letter of instructions upon that head, and that I am able to write it to thee.

Had it been the good pleasure of him who disposes of our lots—and thou no sufferer by the knowledge, I had been well content that thou should'st have dipp'd the pen this moment into the ink, instead of myself; but that not being the case—Mrs. *Shandy* being now close beside me, preparing for bed—I have thrown together without order, and just as they have come into my mind, such hints and documents as I deem may be of use to thee; intending, in this, to give thee a token of my love; not doubting, my dear *Toby*, of the manner in which it will be accepted.

In the first place, in regard to all which concerns religion in the affair—though I perceive from a glow in my cheek, that I blush as I begin to speak to thee upon the subject, as well knowing, notwithstanding thy unaffected secrecy, how few of its offices thou neglectest—yet I would remind thee of one (during the continuance of thy courtship) in a particular manner, which I would not have omitted; and that is, never to go forth upon the enterprise, whether it be in the morning or in the afternoon, without first recommending thyself to the protection of Almighty God, that he may defend thee from the evil one.

Shave the whole top of thy crown clean once at least every four or five days, but oftener if convenient; lest in taking off thy wig before her, thro' absence of mind, she should be able to discover how much has been cut away by Time—and how much by *Trim*.—'Twere better to keep ideas of baldness out of her fancy. Always carry it in thy mind, and act upon it as a sure maxim, *Toby*,—"That women are timid," and 'tis well they are—else there would be no dealing with them.

Let not thy breeches be too tight, or hang too loose about

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thy thighs, like the trunk-hose of our ancestors.—A just medium prevents all conclusions.

Whatever thou hast to say, be it more or less, forget not to utter it in a low soft tone of voice. Silence, and whatever approaches it, weaves dreams of midnight secrecy into the brain: for this cause, if thou canst help it, never throw down the tongs and poker.

Avoid all kinds of pleasantry and facetiousness in thy discourse with her, and do whatever lies in thy power at the same time, to keep from her all books and writings which tend thereto: there are some devotional tracts, which if thou canst entice her to read over—it will be well: but suffer her not to look into *Rabelais*, or *Scarron*, or *Don Quixote*—They are all books which excite laughter; and thou knowest, dear *Toby*, that there is no passion so serious as lust.

Stick a pin in the bosom of thy shirt, before thou enterest her parlour.

And if thou art permitted to sit upon the same sofa with her, and she gives thee occasion to lay thy hand upon hers—beware of taking it—thou canst not lay thy hand upon hers, but she will feel the temper of thine. Leave that and as many other things as thou canst, quite undetermined; by so doing, thou wilt have her curiosity on thy side; and if she is not conquered by that, and thy *asse* continues still kicking, which there is great reason to suppose—Thou must begin, with first losing a few ounces of blood below the ears, according to the practice of the ancient Scythians, who cured the most interperate fits of the appetite by that means.

Avicenna, after this, is for having the part anointed with the syrup of hellebore, using proper evacuations and purges—and I believe rightly. But thou must eat little or no goat's-flesh by any means; and carefully abstain—that is as much as thou canst, from peacocks, cranes, coots, didappers, and water-hens—

As for thy drink, I need not tell thee, it must be the infusion of *Vervain* and the herb *Hanea*, of which *Aelian* relates such effects—but if thy stomach pall with it—discontinue it from time to time, taking cucumbers, melons, purslane, water-lilies, woodbine and lettuce, in the stead of them.

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There is nothing further for thee which occurs to me at present—

—Unless it be the breaking out of a fresh war—So I wish everything, dear *Toby*, for the best.

I rest thy affectionate brother, WALTER SHANDY.

In the case we are considering, Sterne himself would doubtless withdraw from this letter the sentence about “the ass;” and far from counselling a predestinate to have himself bled, would change the diet of cucumber and lettuce for one eminently substantial. He was only recommending such economics, in order to ensure a magic abundance in the hour of battle; here he followed the admirable policy of the English government, which in time of peace maintains only two hundred vessels, but has dockyards capable of furnishing double that number, when the need arises to embrace the sea in full naval strength. When a man belongs to the small number of those whom a generous education has made free of the domain of thought, he should always, before marrying, hold a review of his forces, both physical and moral. To contend successfully with the storms which so many temptations are likely to raise in the heart of his wife, it is not enough for a man to have mastered the science of love-making, even though he be further equipped with a fortune, lifting him clear of all the classes of the predestined; he must have also robust health, exquisite tact, abundant wit, restraint enough not to make his superiority felt, except at fitting times, and finally the keenest of eyes and ears.

No matter how handsome a man’s face, how shapely his figure or how manly his air, if he has it not in him to live up to the expectations raised by these, he must be classified as a predestinate. On the other hand a husband may be ugly, but have much expression in his face; and if he can thus but once make his wife forget his ugliness, such a one is in the most favourable position to combat the germs of the disease. Only he must be careful—and this is a point overlooked in the letter of Sterne—to keep his person free from the slightest unpleasant odour, such as might give momentary offence: at the same time he should make a very sparing use of scent, lest he give rouse to suspicions more damning. His conduct should be as studied and his conversation as choice,

Meditation V: The Predestined

as if he were himself a courtier and his wife the most inconstant woman in the world. For him did a philosopher make this observation: "A woman has been known to wreck her life, to throw away both fortune and honour, when her love for a man has ceased, and that for no better reason than that he has taken off his coat awkwardly, or cut one of his nails crooked, or put on a stocking inside out, or has gone the wrong way about undoing a button.

One of a man's chief cares should be to hide from his wife the true state of his fortune, so that he may be able to satisfy the extravagant caprices she will have from time to time, and not seem behind the celibates in generosity. Finally and most difficult of all, a feat demanding superhuman resolution, he must exercise the most absolute dominion over that ass spoken of by Sterne; the ass must be subject to him as was a serf in the thirteenth century to his lord, must march or halt at the word of command, obeying in all without murmur. Armed with all these accomplishments, a husband may enter the lists with a fair hope of success: none can *entirely* avoid the risk, where his wife is concerned, of being as it were a publisher, preparing a book for others' reading.

"What next?" will be the cry of some worthy people, the sort that can see no further than the ends of their noses, "a queer sort of love it would be, if we have to take so much trouble about it! Before we can be happily married, we have to go to school again, it seems! The government will have to endow a chair of love, like the chair of law the other day!"

Here is our answer. These rules so many and so puzzling, these minute observations, varying for every individual temperament, all are written by nature in the hearts of those born for love, just as the faculty of taste and a certain aptitude for connecting ideas are in-born in the poet, the painter or the musician. Any man who found it wearisome to act on the instructions here given would be as surely a predestinate, as a man unable to perceive the relation between two ideas is an imbecile. In other words, love has its great men unknown to us, as war has its Napoleons, poetry its André Chéniers and philosophy its Descartes.

This last observation contains the germ of an answer to another question, which men for long have been asking: why are happy marriages so rare? This phenomenon in the world

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of morals is rare for the reason, that so few men of genius occur. A lasting passion is a sublime drama, played out by two actors of equal talent, a drama in which the appetites are episodes, the sentiments crises, and the lightest thought a change of scene. Is it likely that there will be found often, in the herd of bi-mana called a nation, a man and a woman possessing in the same high degree the genius for love, when in all other sciences genius is so far to seek? Remember too that in those others the master need only come to an understanding with himself!

Hitherto we have been content to present the difficulties on the physical side, which husband and wife must overcome if they are to be happy: what would our book be like, if we had to unfold the terrifying list of moral obligations, arising out of the differences in character? Let us halt! there is no fear but the man, who is capable of controlling his sex, will be master of his soul. We shall suppose that our model husband fulfils these first conditions of success, and is thus far equipped to dispute the possession of his wife with all comers; also that he is not included in any of the classes of the predestined, which we have passed in review. He is imbued with all our maxims, learned in that admirable science of which we have revealed some principles; he has married with his eyes open, knows his wife and has her love. But it still remains to indicate certain eventualities which may endanger his position, and to prepare him to meet them, so that he may serve as an example for the human race.

Meditation VI: Boarding-Schools

MEDITATION VI: BOARDING-SCHOOLS.

IF you have married a young woman who received her education in a boarding-school, the chances against your happiness are, on this score alone, some thirty more than all those enumerated hitherto; you have verily thrust your hand into a wasp's nest. Do not delay a moment after leaving the church, give your wife no chance to take you in with affectations of ignorance, with innocent airs and modest countenance: your only hope lies in immediately studying and putting into practice those precepts, which we shall set forth in the second part of this book. You shall even execute the rigours of the third part, maintaining the strictest watch at all hours, under cover of paternal solicitude; for on the very morrow of your wedding, perhaps on the day itself, danger will be knocking at the door.

Just call to mind your own school-days: how thorough was the secret instruction *de natura rerum*, on the nature of things! Were Lapeyrouse, Cook or Captain Parry ever so ardent to reach the Poles, as are school-boys to navigate the forbidden latitudes of love? And girls are both cleverer and more curious than boys! How infernal then must be the genius with which they pursue those clandestine meetings and conversations, that no art of matrons can prevent! No man has ever heard the sly guesses, or been initiated into the moral code, of these young females of the human species.

They alone are acquainted with the games, in which the woman's honour is lost in advance; experiments in pleasure, probings after sensation, not unaccompanied by glimmers of sentiment: they may be compared to the thefts of greedy children, who have found an entrance to a locked fruit-store. A girl may leave her school a virgin, but chaste? no! More than once she will have discussed in secret conclaves the important question of lovers, and corruption will already have started in heart or in mind—if in these creatures there is any distinction.

However let us suppose that your wife has not participated in this virginal lasciviousness, these premature excesses: will

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she be any the better for it? She may have had no voice in the secret deliberations of the "big girls," but this will only mean that she has made friends with some of the younger ones, and at least two or three of these friendships will have been intimate in character,—to doubt it we should have to be *too* modest. Are you certain that when your wife left school, her young friends were never admitted into any of those entertainments for two, in which the pastime of the doves is studied in advance, or at least by analogy? In time her friends will marry, and you will then have three or four women to watch instead of one, three or four characters to divine; you will be at the mercy of all their husbands, and of a dozen celibates as well, of whose lives, habits and principles you will know nothing at all, though our meditations will have convinced you of the necessity, in such a case, of being ready for the men you have unwittingly married along with your wife.

Satan alone could have conceived such a thing as a boarding-school for girls, in the middle of a large town! Mme. Campan at least went down to Écouen, to establish her institution since so famous; and this precaution alone proves that she was no ordinary woman. There her charges did not see the museum of the streets, with their decorations by the pencils of evil-minded youths, grotesque figures and obscene words, on an immense scale. They had not daily before their eyes the representations of shameless humanity, exhibited for sale in every town of France; no treacherous bookshops vomited for them the stealthy, poison of the instructors and incendiaries of lust. Nowhere but at Écouen, we suppose, could this wise matron have preserved for you a maiden pure and unspotted, if indeed such a thing is possible at all. Perhaps you will expect easily to prevent your wife from seeing her old school friends? Vain hope! she will meet them at balls, at theatres, in the park, at receptions . . . And how many services cannot two women render one another! But we shall meditate this new terror in its proper place.

That is not all yet: do you suppose, if your mother-in-law sent her daughter to a boarding-school, that it was out of concern for her good? Ah! a girl from twelve to fifteen is a terrible argus, and if your mother-in-law wished no argus about her, I fancy she must belong to the most doubtful section of our respectable women: which means that she will be to her daughter, firstly

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a fatal example, and secondly a formidable ally. Again we must postpone! the mother-in-law demands a Meditation to herself.

And so, on whichever side you lie, the marriage-bed is equally thorny, given a wife from a boarding-school. Before the Revolution, some of the aristocracy used to send their daughters to convents; and the example was followed by a number of persons, who imagined that their daughters, from being in company with those of a great lord, would pick up their manners and tone. Alas for pride! the attempt from the first was fatal to domestic happiness, and soon the convents were open to all the objections of boarding-schools, the evil being aggravated by the general idleness. The grills of the cloister are alone enough to inflame the imagination! Solitude is the condition of all others, in which the devil likes best to make his attack. There is no knowing what ravages the most ordinary phenomena of life may work in the souls of these imaginative young creatures, at once so ignorant and so unoccupied. Some of them, from having embraced chimaeras, fall into vices more or less unnatural. Others, from having an exaggerated idea of conjugal happiness, say to themselves when they belong to a husband, "What! is this all?" Thus the incomplete knowledge, acquired by a number of girls growing up together, has at once the danger of ignorance and the disillusionment of science.

A young girl brought up at home by a mother or an old aunt, no matter whether these be virtuous or hypocritical, sweet or sour; a girl whose feet have never crossed the threshold without being surrounded by chaperones, and whose childhood has been industriously employed, no matter if the work was useless in itself; a girl, in short, to whom all is unknown, who has not even seen Seraphin at the theatre: such a treasure is to be found here and there in the world, but like forest-flowers so surrounded with brush-wood, that mortal eyes can scarce descry them. The man who, possessing a bloom so sweet and pure, leaves it to be tended by others, merits a thousand times his fate; he is either a fool or a monster.

This would certainly seem the place to inquire, if there is any method to ensure making a good marriage; for having established this, we could put off indefinitely the precautions, of which an account is planned for our second and third parts.

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But is it not proved by experience, that it is easier to read the *École des femmes* in a closed oven, than to know the character, the habits and the mind of a marriageable girl? That, no doubt, is why most men set about marrying in just the same way as they would go to buy a block of shares on the Stock Exchange! We hope that the last Meditation sufficiently demonstrated, that in the matter of marriage most men are inveterately careless of their honour: very well, is it likely that many will be found, at once rich enough and intelligent enough to devote two whole years, like Burchell in the Vicar of Wakefield, to observing and forming conclusions as to the young women, out of whom they propose to choose a wife? Why! after they have made their choice and the dangerous possession is theirs, most men hardly give a thought to their charge, beyond the conjugal enjoyments of that period known in England as the honey-moon. By the way, we shall shortly discuss the influence of the said period.

Meanwhile, as we have long reflected on this important question of choice, we should like to remark that there are better and worse ways of choosing a wife, even when it is done on the spur of the moment. There can be no doubt for example, that the chances will be in your favour,—

Firstly, if you pick a young woman resembling in temperament those of Louisiana or Carolina. And to obtain certain information as to the temperament of a young woman, all you have to do is to employ with chamber-maids the system described by Gil Blas; it is often employed by statesmen to discover conspiracies, or to learn what sort of a night a government has had.

Secondly, if you choose a young woman who, without being ugly, is not what is reckoned a beauty. We regard it as an indisputable principle, that the degree of a man's happiness—or rather, lack of unhappiness—in marriage will vary as the quantities combined in his wife of these two elements, namely sweetness of temper approaching the angelic, and ugliness approaching the insupportable.

But would you know the truth? Open Rousseau; for there is no aspect of public morals, of which he has not shown the import. For example: "Among people who have morals, the unmarried women are easy, and the married severe; the contrary is true of those who have none." It would follow from the principle

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implied in this profoundly true observation, that there would be fewer unhappy marriages if men married their mistresses. The education of girls would then undergo important modifications in France. Hitherto the French codes of law and morals, being faced with crime on the one hand and misconduct on the other, have chosen to prevent the crime; with the result that no distinction is made between the misconduct of an unmarried woman and of a wife, though in degree of injury they are not to be compared. Would there not be far less danger in giving liberty to girls, than in leaving it to wives? The idea of taking a girl on trial will be to the serious as much a subject for thought, as it will be to the ribald a subject for laughter. The morals of Germany, of Switzerland, of England and of the United States give a degree of freedom to girls, that in France would seem to be the overthrow of all morals; nevertheless it is certain that in those four countries the marriages are less unhappy than in France.

“When a woman has surrendered herself wholly to a lover, it must mean that she knew the man whom love was offering to her: but though she has given her esteem and her confidence, the gift of her heart may still be withheld.” Radiant with truth, these words perhaps give us a glimpse into that dungeon, at the bottom of which Mirabeau wrote. The pregnant observation they contain, although due to the most reckless of his passions, is no less the key to the social problem we are concerned with. For a marriage, prepared by the searching rites of love, and sealed under the disenchantment following passion, ought surely to be an indissoluble union. A wife could no longer reproach her husband with his legal right, as an advantage taken of her innocence; she could no longer find in an involuntary contract a justification for its breach. To-day the tempter has always an accomplice in her heart, seductive sophisms occur to her unsought, proving that if marriage is a consecration of love, her duty is to give herself to the man she loves now: but under our proposed system a wife will no longer have the right to complain of the imperfections, inseparable from all human institutions; she will have had experience of marriage in advance, will have married its tyranny, knowing it well. Granted that many girls are deceived in their hopes of love, will it not be a great advantage for them not to be the companions of men, whom a blind acceptance has given them a right to despise?

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Some alarmists will exclaim, that such a change in our morals would strike at the very roots of society; that law, or the customs which are the basis of law, cannot be invoked to sanctify a state of scandalous immorality; that if certain evils are inevitable, at least they should not be countenanced by society; and so on. The obvious answer is, that the proposed change will tend to prevent those evils, which hitherto have been regarded as inevitable. Without our calculations going very deep, they have always revealed an immense sore in the body social: but our moralists would prefer the greater evil to the less, the violation of the very principle on which society rests, to a possible abuse of liberty by unmarried women; rather the corruption of mothers of families, poisoning the springs of education, and in each case bringing unhappiness to at least four persons, than the corruption of a single unmarried woman, which would involve no one but herself, or one child at the most! Perish the honour of ten virgins, say we, rather than crown our mothers with such a mockery of virtue, than hang up such lying tables of morality! We fully recognise, that in the picture of a young woman abandoned by her seducer, there is something tragically impressive; in the background are broken vows and sacred confidences betrayed, while on the ruin of a virtue too easy sits innocence in tears, doubting all in finding that a father's love for his child can fail. Yes, the unfortunate is still innocent; she may become a faithful wife and tender mother, and then if the past is heavy with clouds, the future is blue as a summer sky. Is there any such colour in the murky picture of a wife's infidelity? In the former case the woman was a victim, in this she is a criminal. What has the adulteress to look forward to? Even though God remit her sin, its fruits live on here below, however virtuous her life henceforth. If James I. was the son of Rizzio, the crime of Mary endured as long as her calamitous house, and the fall of the Stuarts was justice.

But truly, is there such awful danger in the emancipation of girls? It is easy to accuse them of often letting themselves be deceived, in the desire to escape at all costs the unmarried state; but that could only happen in the actual state of our morals. To-day a young woman is unacquainted with the snares of the seducer, she meets him in her naked frailty; and her delusive imagination, prompted by vague desires within, and fortified by the

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convenient maxims of the fashionable world, would be a treacherous guide enough; but her blindness is the greater, in that rarely any girl confides to another the secret of her first lover. Like everyone else in the world, she would have less to fear from known dangers than from encounters with mysterious attractions. Besides, are we to take no account of the modesty and timidity of a girl, protective forces given her by nature, surely for the very purpose of resisting any man who does not love her? Lastly, where is the girl so simple as not to have calculated, that the most immoral of men will want to marry a woman of principle, just as masters want perfection in their servants; and consequently, that what will give her the highest market-value is virtue?

What is all this about, anyhow? For whom do you think we are pleading? Is it likely we should show this concern for some half million virginities, all armed with natural repugnances, not to mention a high sense of their own importance? Tut, tut! they are well able to defend themselves, and to make their own price. Why, the eighteen million beings, whom for other reasons we excluded at the beginning, nearly all marry on this system of ours, which only needs to be recognised by the moral code. As to the intermediate classes, by which the poor bi-mana are separated from the privileged persons at the head of a nation, the number of foundlings left to their fate by these semi-independant classes has been on the increase since the peace, if we are to believe M. Benoiston de Châteauneuf, perhaps the most courageous scientist who ever devoted himself to the arid but useful researches of statistics. To what a deep sore do we bring the remedy! think of this multiplicity of bastards revealed by statistics, in addition to the irregularities in high society, which our own calculations give reason to suspect. But it is difficult to exhibit here all the advantages, which would ensue from the emancipation of girls. When we come to study marriage as it is under our existing system of morals, and the circumstances that accompany it, the judicious mind will perceive at once the value of the liberty and the true education, which we demand for girls in the name both of reason and of nature. The insistence in France on the virginity of brides is the most stupid of all the superstitions remaining to us. Orientals take their wives without concerning themselves about their past, and shut them up to make sure of their future; while the French

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put their girls into a sort of seraglios guarded by mothers, themselves the slaves of religious prejudice, and at the same time give entire liberty to their wives, thus concerning themselves less about the future than about the past. What is needed is simply to make an inversion of our moral system; then perhaps we shall end by giving to conjugal fidelity as spicy a flavour, as women to-day find in adultery.

But the discussion would lead us too far from our subject, if we were to examine in all its details the moral improvement, the restoration of ancient virtue, which France will know doubtless in the twentieth century—for morals themselves are reformed so slowly! To produce the slightest change, is it not necessary for the boldest idea of the past century to have become a commonplace of the present? It may be suggested that we are (as it were) flirting with this question, either to show that it has not escaped us, or to have another work to bequeath to our grand-children: well, sure enough, we must make a third bequest of it! The first was on the subject of courtesans, the second was the physiology of pleasure: as the verse says,—

“When we reach ten, we shall make you a cross.”

In the present state of our morals and of our imperfect civilisation there exists a problem, which must remain insoluble until conditions change, and which in the meanwhile renders idle all discussion as to the choosing of a wife: we leave it, with the rest, to the meditations of philosophers.

PROBLEM.

NO ONE HAS BEEN ABLE TO DECIDE, IF A WOMAN IS MOVED TO INFIDELITY MORE BY THE IMPOSSIBILITY (IN HER CIRCUMSTANCES) OF ENJOYING A CHANGE, OR MORE BY THE LIBERTY SHE IS ALLOWED IN THAT RESPECT.

For the rest, be it remembered that in this work we seize a man at the threshold of his married life: if he has happened on a full-blooded woman, highly-strung and of vivid imagination, while indolent in character, his situation will be so much the more serious. But the same man would be in even greater peril, if his wife had the habit of drinking nothing but water: on this subject see the Meditation entitled “Conjugal Hygiene.” Alas! that

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is not all; if she has some talent for singing, or if she catches cold easily, let him tremble all his days; for it is well known that the only women as passionate as singers are those who have a delicate mucous system. Lastly, the danger in every case would be worse again, if your wife were under seventeen years of age; or else if her backside were of a pale and wan tint, for this sort of women are almost all artificial.

But we do not wish to anticipate the terrors, which await husbands in the symptoms of disaster they will themselves recognise in the nature of their wives. This digression has already led far from boarding-schools, in which so many troubles are prepared, and whence issue girls incapable of appreciating the painful sacrifices by which the honourable man, who does them the honour to marry them, has arrived at his wealth; girls impatient for the enjoyment of luxury, ignorant of our laws, ignorant of our morals, greedily seizing the empire which beauty gives them, and ready to turn from the true utterances of the soul and give ear to whispered flattery. May this Meditation leave in the memory of all readers, though they only opened the book for distraction or as a foil in conversation, a profound aversion from young women brought up in boarding-schools! for then it will have rendered already great service to the nation.

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MEDITATION VII: THE HONEYMOON.

IF our first Meditations proved that it is almost impossible for a married woman to remain virtuous in France, the national frailty was to some extent explained in the enumeration of the celibates and of the predestined, in our remarks on the education of girls and in our rapid survey of the difficulties attending the choice of a wife. Thus, after frankly denouncing the secret malady, with which the body social is afflicted, we have sought its causes in the imperfections of the laws, in the inconsequence of the moral code, in the contradictions of our habits and in the general lack of intelligence. One aspect of the disease alone remains to be studied, namely the entrance of the germ.

At once we touch on first principles, in approaching the high questions involved in the honeymoon. We shall find here the origin of all conjugal phenomena; the honeymoon will furnish the shining ring, to which as links of a chain our observations, our axioms, our problems will attach themselves, all scattered as they are, deliberately, across the wise follies of our babbling meditations. The honeymoon will be, so to speak, the crown of that analysis, which we had to undertake before letting our two champions come to grips. Honeymoon is an English expression, which is passing into all languages, so happily does it depict that fugitive season, in which life is all sweetness; the idea will remain as all illusions remain, yes! for it is an illusion, and the most damnable of all. If it appears as a nymph crowned with flowers, a caressing siren, it is because the honeymoon is misfortune itself: that hag most often comes gay and dancing.

The couple destined for a life-long love know nothing of the honeymoon; it has no existence for them or rather, it exists always; they are like the immortals, for whom death has no meaning. But such happiness is outside of our scope; for readers of this book marriage is under the influence of two moons, the honeymoon and the April moon. The latter ends as a crescent, two-horned; and when it shines on a marriage, it is for eternity.

How can the honeymoon illumine two beings not destined to love one another?

Meditation VII: The Honeymoon

How does it set, once it has risen ?

Have all marriages their honeymoon ?

Let us proceed to answer these three questions in turn. We shall see now all the fruit borne by the admirable education we give our daughters, as well as by the prudent customs to which we conform in marrying; for we are going to examine the circumstances, preceding and accompanying the least unhappy marriages.

Her mother will have developed further in the young woman, whom you will take for your wife, a curiosity that is by nature intense; and as the mothers of France pride themselves on passing their daughters every day through the fire without letting them be burnt, this curiosity at last knows no bounds. Profound ignorance of the mysteries of marriage leaves this creature, at once cunning and simple, without defence against the perils that beset her. Marriage being ceaselessly presented to her as a state of triumphant liberty, of sovereign enjoyment, her desire for it is increased by every new interest she finds in life; for her, to marry is to be called from nonentity into life. If she has in her a capacity for happiness, the fact has been instilled into her by religion, by law, by custom and by the unvaried teaching of her mother, that happiness can only come to her through you. If she lacks natural virtue, she recognises the necessity of obedience, as a means to winning—you her salvation. In the beginning every society ordains the enslavement of woman; and she conceives not even a desire to be free, so weak and ignorant does she feel herself. In the same way, unless your wife has a repugnance for you, which it would be unpardonable in you not to have divined, there is every reasonable likelihood that her aim will be to please you; to her you are an unknown divinity. Finally, to make your triumph even easier, you take her at a moment when nature is ripe for, and often demands imperiously, the pleasures of which you are the dispenser. Like St. Peter you hold the keys of Paradise.

Now we ask every reasonable person, could a demon collect round an angel, whose ruin he had sworn, destructive elements with greater assiduity, than is shown by good morals in compassing the ruin of any husband ? Are you not, in your marriage, like a king surrounded by insidious flatterers ?

Delivered in all her ignorance and all her ardour to a man,

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who may love her indeed, but cannot and ought not to know the secret delicacy of her soul, will not this maiden blush inwardly, all the time that she is so complacently submissive; will not her young imagination be always looking for the realisation of its dreams, be always waiting for a tomorrow that never comes? In this odd situation, in which the laws of nature are at grips with the laws of society, a young woman meekly surrenders herself, suffering in silence out of self-interest: for her surrender is a speculation, her complacency a hope, her humility a chaste discipline in which she allows you an advantage for the present. . . Her silence, ah! is it altogether designing, is there not an element of—generosity? Observe, she will be the victim of your whims as long as she does not understand them, she will suffer your character until she has completed her study of it; that is to say, she will sacrifice herself without loving, because she believes in the semblance of passion in you, that the first period of possession gives: she will no longer be silent from the day she has recognised the uselessness of her sacrifices. A morning will come when all the misunderstandings, which have presided at this union from its beginning, will be flung off, as by a branch suddenly relieved of a weight; then it will be seen, that you took for love the negative existence of a young woman expecting happiness, one who flew on the breeze of your desires in the hope that you would divine the brooding gale in her, and who dared not complain of a secret unhappiness for which she was the first to blame herself.

What man would not be the dupe of an illusion so long prepared, and of which his young wife is at once the victim and the innocent perpetrator? You would have to be a god to escape the fascinating wiles, with which you have been surrounded by nature and by society. Is not everything in you, as well as around you, a snare? for to win happiness, you would have to resist the impetuous demands of your senses; and in this battle you lack the solid earthwork, raised by the light hand of a woman not yet possessed, whose favour you are seeking. Aha! you have marched your troops through the streets when there was no one at the windows; you have shot off a rocket, and only the case remains when your guest arrives for the show. Your wife, when introduced to the pleasures of marriage, was like a Mohican

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on the stage; the manager is annoyed, when the simple savage begins to understand.

LVI. IN MARRIAGE, THE MOMENT IN WHICH TWO HEARTS UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER COMES SWIFT AS LIGHT, AND RETURNS NO MORE IF IT BE LET PASS.

This first essay in joint life, during which the wife is encouraged by a hope of happiness, by an enthusiasm for duties as yet novel, by a natural desire to please, by the charm of virtue when hand in hand with love, is called the honeymoon. How can it endure long between two beings, who are bound together for life without knowing anything of one another? The only wonder is, that the ghastly absurdities, heaped by our morals on the nuptial bed, produce as few hatreds as they do!

Take the most essential facts of life, as that the wise man's existence is a placid stream, while the prodigal's is a torrent; as that the reckless youth, who has plucked every rose on his outward journey, will find only thorns on his return; or dropping metaphor, that the man who has spent a million francs in youthful extravagance cannot enjoy throughout life the income of forty thousand, which that million would have yielded: these might be crazy paradoxes, for all the regard that is paid to them in our system of morals; men might have had no experience of cause and effect, to judge by their attitude to marriage. Our examples will serve to illustrate the consequences of the honeymoon; the facts are known, we wanted to show that they are inevitable. But how are we to account for the cause, the fact that men equipped by a privileged education with certain powers of thought, that men who shine in politics, in the arts, in commerce or in society, and are therefore accustomed to subtle combinations of ideas,—how are we to account for the fact that these men when they marry, and that with the firm intention of being happy, of governing their wives either by love or by force, all fall into the same pit, become blind fools after enjoying a measure of happiness? Here is a problem certainly, whose solution must be sought in the unfathomed depths of the human soul, rather than in such physical facts as we have hitherto used to explain the phenomena of marriage. The perilous quest of the secret laws, which almost all men in the

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circumstances must violate unwittingly, brings enough glory even to him who runs on the rocks, for us to make the venture. Come, then!

Despite all that fools have to say on the difficulty of explaining love, it is governed by principles as infallible as those of geometry; but as each individual falsifies them to suit his convenience, love is blamed for caprices, which are the result of our variety of character. If we were only able to see the varied effects of light, without understanding the cause, many minds would refuse to believe in the regular march of the sun, or in the single origin of day-light; it would be easier for the blind to hit the truth. For our part, we boast with Socrates, though not claiming to be as wise as he, that we know nothing but love; and now we shall try to apply some of his precepts, to save the married and those about to marry the trouble of racking their brains—they might exhaust them too quickly!

All our previous observations may be reduced to a single proposition, and this may be considered as the last clause, or the first if you like, of that secret doctrine of love, which alas! would soon weary you if we did not give it in abridged form. The idea is embodied in the following formula.

LVII. BETWEEN TWO BEINGS DISPOSED TO LOVE, THE DURATION OF THE PASSION WILL BE IN PROPORTION TO THE PRIMARY RESISTANCE OF THE WOMAN, OR TO THE OBSTACLES WHICH SOCIETY MAY CHANCE TO PUT IN THE WAY.

If you are not kept waiting more than a day, your love will last no more perhaps than three nights. Where are we to look for the causes of this law? I know not. Cast your eye around you, and you will find abundant examples: in the vegetable kingdom, the plants which take the longest time to grow are those to whom the longest life is promised, and whose substance will be the most durable in use; in the realm of morals, the works begun but yesterday will die to-morrow; in the realm of physics, the body which curtails the period of gestation brings forth a dead fruit. In every case, a long-lived product is long being hatched by time. A long future demands a long past. If love is a boy, passion is a man. This general law, which regulates

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nature and conscious beings alike, is the very one that all marriages infringe, as we have shown. The principle gave rise to the amorous fables of the Middle Ages, to the tales of Amadis and Lancelot and Tristram, whose constancy in love seems truly fabulous. These form a national mythology, killed, alas! in its flower by our imitation of Greek literature; its gracious figures, born of the imagination of the troubadours, embody the truth we have stated.

LVIII. THE DURATION OF OUR ATTACHMENTS DEPENDS ON THE CARE AND TROUBLE GIVEN TO THE ACQUISITION.

As to the causes of this primordial law of love, all that our meditations have revealed is summed up in the following axiom, which states at once the principle and its consequence.

LIX. IN ALL THINGS, WE RECEIVE NEITHER MORE NOR LESS THAN WE HAVE GIVEN.

The truth of this last is so self-evident, that we need not attempt a demonstration. We shall only add one observation, which seems to us not unimportant. The statement of the philosopher, that everything is true and everything is false, is one that every man will interpret in his own way, for the human intellect is naturally sophistical; indeed human affairs seem to have as many facets, as there are minds at work on them. Here is our own interpretation, and its application to the matter in hand. There does not exist in creation a law, which is not balanced by a contrary law; life consists always of two opposite forces in equilibrium. And so, while it is true in love that you will receive as you have given, it is conversely true, that if you have given too much you will receive too little. The mother who lets her children see all her care for them creates ingratitude in them; perhaps it comes through the sense of an obligation impossible to discharge. The wife who loves more than she is loved will be necessarily subjected to tyranny: the love which lasts is that which holds the forces of two beings in equilibrium. Now this equilibrium can always be established, it is only necessary for the one who loves the more to revolve around the one who loves the less; and is

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this not after all the sweetest sacrifice that a loving soul can make, provided love go so far as to accept the unequal conditions.

What feelings of satisfaction stir the soul of the philosopher, on realising that there is thus perhaps a single force in the world, as there is a single God in heaven; and that our thoughts and affections are governed by the same laws as move the sun, open the flowers and animate the universe! Perhaps it is in this metaphysical conception of love that we must seek the solution of the following proposition, bearing so vividly as it does on the question of honeymoons and April moons.

THEOREM

MAN GOES FROM REPUGNANCE TO LOVE; BUT WHEN HE HAS BEGUN BY LOVING AND ARRIVES AT REPUGNANCE, HE NEVER RETURNS TO LOVE.

There are human organisms in which feeling is as incomplete, as is thought in sterile minds. Just as in the latter case the mind may be capable of seeing connexions between things, yet can draw no conclusion therefrom, so the deficient heart may experience emotion, but cannot make comparisons by which to express it. Talent, in love as in every other art, is a combination of the power to conceive with the power to execute. The world is full of persons who can sing simple airs, but cannot enter on variations; who have half-formed thoughts and half-felt affections, and are as little able to co-ordinate the one as the other. In a word, they are incomplete beings. Now mate a fine intelligence with one of these, and you will be preparing a disaster; for there must be balance in everything. We leave to the boudoir-philosophers and the shop-parlour sages the pleasure of investigating the numerous ways, in which equilibrium may be upset by mind or temperament, by accident or by social conditions; and we go on to examine the last circumstance, which makes for the setting of the honeymoon and the rising of the April moon.

There is in life a principle more powerful than life itself. It is a movement deriving its force from an unknown spring. Man is no more in the secret of this vortex, than is the earth initiated into the cause of its own rotation. This mysterious force we like to call the river of life; we see men's inmost thoughts as only eddies in its flood, which gives its own direction to the individual will

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of each, and carries us along in spite of ourselves. And so it comes about that a man of good sense, an honourable man who in business would not fail to meet his bills, and who could have avoided death, or a disease perhaps more terrible than death, by carrying out a simple treatment regularly, is well and truly nailed up between four boards, because he said to himself every evening, "Oh! to-morrow I shall not forget my tabloids." How are we to explain this strange fascination, paralysing all the activities of life? Is it lack of energy? but the strongest willed are subject to it. Is it lack of memory? but its victims often possess this faculty in the highest degree. Whatever is the explanation of it, this tendency to ignore consequences, which we can all recognise in our neighbours, is what makes the honeymoon fatal to the majority of husbands. The wisest of men, while avoiding all the dangers we have indicated up to this, will often fall into the pit he has here dug for himself.

We have noticed, that the attitude of a man towards marriage and its dangers corresponds, in its successive phases, with his attitude towards the wearing of a wig; perhaps we shall find a formula for life in the following stages of thought in regard to the wig.

FIRST PERIOD. Is it credible that I shall ever have white hair?

SECOND PERIOD. Even if I do have white hair, I shall certainly never wear a wig. Heavens! is there anything so ugly as a wig?

THIRD PERIOD. (*One morning you hear a young voice, with more love in it than you might think perhaps, crying gaily, "Hullo! you have a white hair!"*)—Why not have a well-made wig that would deceive everyone? There is a kind of merit in deceiving people successfully; besides, a wig keeps one's head warm, it prevents colds, etc.

FOURTH PERIOD. (*The wig is so cleverly put on as to deceive all but your acquaintance; the wig is your main pre-occupation, and every morning in your pride you outdo the skilfullest hair-dressers.*)

FIFTH PERIOD. (*The wig neglected.*) What an infernal nuisance having to take off one's hair every night, and to curl it every morning!

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SIXTH PERIOD. (*Some white hairs are allowed to show beneath the wig; it is crooked, and observers can see around the nape of your neck a white line contrasting with the darker shades of the wig, which has been pushed up by the collar of your coat.*)

SEVENTH PERIOD. (*The wig resembles a door-mat, and if we may say so, you make a fool of your wig.*)

"Tell me, please," said one of the powerful female intellects who have deigned to elucidate the more obscure passages of our book, "what do you mean by this wig?"

"Madam," we answered, "when a man falls into a state of indifference about his wig, he is—he is—what I am sure your husband is not!"

"But my husband is not . . ." she stopped to think, "he is not—charming; he is not—very good-looking; he is not—good-tempered; he is not . . ."

"Then, Madam, he would be indifferent about his wig." We looked at one another, she with a well-acted dignity, I with a scarcely perceptible smile. "I see," said I, "that one must pay unfailing respect to the *ears* of the smaller sex, for they are its one chaste part;" and I assumed the attitude of one who has an important revelation to make, while the lady lowered her eyes, as if there might be something to blush at in the discourse. "Nowadays, Madam, a minister would not be hanged for a word, as once; a Chateaubriand would hardly torture a Françoise de Foix, nor do we carry at our side a sword to avenge any slight. In an age in which civilisation makes such rapid strides, and in which any science is to be learned in twenty-four lessons, all things ought to keep pace with this march towards perfection; we may no longer use, for instance, the coarse and rude language of our masculine ancestors. The age which produces such elegant furniture, such fine porcelain and such glossy fabrics, ought to be the age of paraphrase and circumlocution. We must therefore try to coin a new word, to take the place of the comic expression used by Molière; for, as a contemporary author has put it, the language of that great man is too free for ladies who find gauze too thick for their garments.

"Let us see. Nowadays men of the world know as well as scholars the inborn taste of the Greeks for mysteries, and how that

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poetic nation could tint with the supernatural their ancient traditions. In the mouths of their rhapsodists, at once poets and story-tellers, kings became gods, and their amorous adventures were transformed into immortal allegories. Now according to M. Chompré, professor of law and author of the Dictionary of Classical Mythology, the labyrinth was 'an enclosure adorned with trees and buildings, so arranged that a young man, having once entered, could never find his way out.' Here and there he would come out on flowery glades, but they were only crossing places for a score of paths, which all presented the same appearance to the eye, no matter in which direction they led: in the tangled undergrowth of the wood, amid rocks and briars, the trapped one had to combat a monster called the Minotaur. Madam, if you will be so good as to bear in mind, that the Minotaur was of all horned beasts that which mythology presents to us as the most dangerous; that to obtain relief from his ravages, the Athenians were bound to deliver to him, year after year, fifty virgins; if you will bear this in mind, I say, you will hardly fall into the error of our good M. Chompré, who sees in the fatal labyrinth no more than a maze, of the kind that decorate English gardens. Rather will you find in the fable a profound allegory, will recognise an image, terrible in its fidelity, of the dangers of marriage. The wall-paintings, recently discovered at Herculaneum, have finally established the truth of this view. As a matter of fact, the learned had long accepted the statement of certain ancient authors, that the Minotaur was a creature half man and half bull; but in the fifth panel of paintings at Herculaneum, the monster is represented with a body entirely human, and only a bull's head; and to remove any trace of doubt, he lies dead at the feet of Theseus.

"How is it, Madam, that we have to call in ancient myths to save us from the hypocrisy which gains on us daily, forbidding us to laugh as our fathers laughed? In old days, when a young lady did not succeed in holding up the screen behind which a respectable woman hides her conduct, our ancestors in their bluff way would explain everything by a single word; but you ladies of to-day, posing as angels of reticence, only murmur, 'Poor dear! she is very charming, but you know . . . '—'But what?' I say; and the most you will venture is, 'But she is rather *inconsequent*.' I have often tried, Madam, to discover the signification of this

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last word, also the rhetorical figure by which you make it express the contrary of its proper meaning: my meditations have been vain. Vert-vert, it seems, was the last to pronounce the good old word, but unfortunately he was addressing harmless nuns, whose infidelities did not touch the honour of men. According to us, when a woman is 'inconsequent,' her husband is *minotaurised*. Further, if the minotaurised one is a gallant man and held in general esteem, then in speaking of him you will remember that some husbands deserve really to be pitied, and you will say in a voice low and fluty, 'Mr. A. is an estimable man, and he has a very pretty wife, but they say he is unfortunate in his home politics.' Thus, Madam, the estimable man, unfortunate in home politics, the man who has an inconsequent wife, the minotaurised husband, are all simply husbands out of Molière's plays. Well, thou goddess of modern taste, have these expressions a sufficiently chaste transparence for thee?"

"Good heavens!" she cried with a laugh, "if the thing remains, what matter whether it is expressed in a hundred syllables or in two?" So saying, she made me an ironical curtsy and disappeared, doubtless going to rejoin the countesses of the Preface and the rest of that company of fictitious persons, so often employed by story-tellers to discover the old manuscripts they themselves are writing. As for you more real (if less numerous) persons who read our book, if some among you are fighting the same battle as our conjugal champion, you need not expect to become all at once unfortunate in your home politics; a man arrives at that conjugal temperature by insensible degrees. Many men have been unfortunate in home politics all their lives, without ever knowing it! This domestic revolution always follows certain rules; indeed the revolutions of the honeymoon are as calculable as those of the astronomical moon, the same phases succeeding one another in every marriage. But have we not already proved, that moral nature has its laws like physical nature?

Your young wife, as we have said elsewhere, will never take a lover without meditating seriously on the step. By the time the honeymoon is on the wane, you will have developed indeed, but not satisfied, the desire for pleasure in her; you will have opened to her the door of life just enough for her to have a

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good idea, from the prose of your facile love-making, what poetry may be in the concord of body with soul. As a timid bird, still frightened by the noise of rifle-fire that has ceased, puts its head out of the nest, looks around, sees the world, so your wife, having in mind the charade you have played, and still looking for the word, discovers instinctively the void in your casual passion. She guesses rightly, that only with a lover will she be able to regain free-will in love, and so enter into love's highest delights. You have taken green timber, and dried it for another's fire. In your relations with your wife you have arrived at a point at which any woman, even the most virtuous, would be feeling herself worthy of a grand passion, would have dreamt of it and be ready to take fire at any moment; for there is always self-esteem to reckon with in a subject foe. "If the trade of honest woman were no more than dangerous, that were fair enough," said an old lady to us once, "but it is wearisome as well! and I have never known a virtuous wife but thought she was playing a fool's part."

In those early days, even before a lover has presented himself, a wife will have prepared, so to speak, his defence; she becomes a battlefield, on which duties legal and religious engage with secret desires, that refuse any bridle but such as she may put on them herself. Here begins for you a new order of things; here is your first notice that nature, kindly mother as she is, gives to all creatures in the race of life their share of danger. Nature has hung round the neck of the Minotaur a rattle, like that in the tail of the deadly snake, the terror of travellers. Now your wife begins to exhibit what we shall call *the first symptoms*; and woe to him who has not learned how to combat them! Those readers who shall recall, as we describe them, such manifestations in their own home politics may pass to the conclusion of the book; they will find there some consolation.

This critical situation, in which marriage remains for varying periods, will be the starting point of our main discourse as it has been the goal of our preliminary observations. A wife at this stage will involuntarily give mysterious signs, scarcely perceptible hints, and these we must leave to the finer minds to recognise for themselves; the following Meditation can only hope to give some broad directions, for the benefit of neophytes in the sublime science of marriage.

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MEDITATION VIII: FIRST SYMPTOMS.

WHEN your wife is in the crisis we have to examine, you are yourself lulled by a sense of sweet and entire security. You have seen the sun so many times, that you begin to disbelieve the stories of eclipses; you no longer give to your wife's slightest acts that interested attention, which they excited in the first heat of possession. This indifference is the reason why many husbands fail to notice the symptoms, by which their wives announce a first storm; this indolence of mind has made minotaurs of more husbands than have opportunity, cabs, sofas and flats, put together. The sense of security is produced, and in some measure justified, by the outward calm in which you live. One would think that the plot against you, now being hatched by the million famished celibates, was directed by a single mind; for although these bucks, young and old, are all rivals one of another, and not one of them knows what the others are doing, a sort of tribal instinct seems to co-ordinate their movements.

When two young people marry, the *sbirri* of the minotaur have usually the politeness to leave the couple entirely to themselves for a while. They regard a husband as a workman, whose duty is to cut, polish and set the diamond, which one day shall be passed from hand to hand for general admiration. And so the spectacle of a young couple, very much taken with one another, always rejoices those of the celibates whom we call the old rakes; and they are most careful not to interrupt work, of which society will have such benefit. They know that heavy rains do not last long; and standing aside they bide their time, judging with a marvellous nicety the moment when the young couple begin to weary of the seventh heaven. Indeed the quickness of the celibates to sense it, when the wind blows from the North in a household, is only equalled by the state of torpor into which husbands relapse, at the very moment when their April moon is rising. There is even in gallantry a maturity of time, which men must know how to wait for; the great man is he who foresees all that may arise from given conditions. Men of fifty-two, already

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mentioned as dangerous, understand well, for example, that the very lover, who is haughtily rejected by a wife to-day, may be received with open arms three months hence. The truth is, that married men are as artless in neglecting to awake love in their wives, as they are in devouring the love awakened by another.

In the days when you wandered with Madam through the delicious meadows of the seventh heaven, whether you were of those whose abode there is long or short,—for the term varies according to the character of the couple, as the preceding Meditation showed,—you went little or not at all into the world. Happy in your home politics, if you went abroad it was as lovers go, to make a pleasure-trip together, perhaps to the theatre, perhaps into the solitudes of the country: the moment you re-appear in society, whether together or separately; when you begin to be seen constantly at balls and parties, that is to say, at entertainments designed to provide escape from the heart's void; then the celibates know that your wife is seeking distraction, that she is weary of husband and marriage; they know that half their road is travelled. You are fated to be minotaurised, your wife is becoming inconsequent; or rather, she will be extremely consequent henceforth, will reason with astonishing profundity. Though you see the fire, you will not suspect the match which lit it, for she will appear more devoted than ever to her duties; the less she has of virtue, the more care she will take to put on its colours. A double crime! it recalls the line of Crébillon,—

“Murdering, must we also rob the heirs?”

Never will you have seen your wife more anxious to please; she will be trying to compensate you in advance for a secret injury, will touch you so by little unexpected kindnesses, that you can but believe her love eternal: surely it was to describe your state, that there arose the phrase, a fool's paradise!

Women being what they are, they either despise their husbands for the ease with which they are deceived, or hate them for the difficulties they put in the way; but there is worse yet, instead of hating they may become coldly indifferent to them. The first symptom of this in a wife is an unaccountable eccentricity. A woman loves to escape from herself, to avoid her own thoughts, but never so desperately as when unhappily married. She dresses with the greatest of care, and explains that she is thinking of you,

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and how proud you will be to see your wife drawing looks of admiration from all at the party. But when she is returned to the dulness of the home, you will see her at one minute gloomy and thoughtful, at another laughing and joking, as if to forget something; but as suddenly again she will take the grave look of a German going into battle. This variability is the sign that she is hesitating, before taking the fatal step. Many wives at this stage read novels, to comfort themselves with the image, always presented in some form or another, of love triumphing at last over impossible obstacles; or perhaps to accustom their minds to the dangers of an intrigue.

But there is another line your wife may take. She will profess the highest esteem for you, but say it is as a brother she loves you; she will maintain that rational friendship is the only true and enduring sentiment, and that the aim of marriage should be to establish this relationship between husband and wife. If necessary, she will point out that at present she has only duties, and that marriage also gives her certain rights. She reviews with a coldness that you alone can appreciate all the conditions of married life; its joys seem to have meant but little to her, anyhow they are always there, she knows them by heart and, what is more, has *analysed* them. . . Ah! how many slight but terrible signs will bring it home to an intelligent husband, that this frail being, instead of being consumed in the flames of his passion, has acquired the power of rational argument!

LX. THE MORE CRITICISM, THE LESS LOVE.

This will account for the alternations in her, firstly of gaiety, in which you laugh with her, and secondly of reflectiveness, in which you marvel at her profundity: they are characteristic of a wavering mind. Sometimes she becomes suddenly all tenderness, as if repenting of her thoughts and intentions; sometimes she is sulky and incomprehensible; in fact she bears out the saying, *varium et mutabile femina*,—a condition we have hitherto had the stupidity to attribute to their *sex*. Diderot, in his attempt to explain such atmospheric variations, has traced them to what he calls the savage beast: but you will never observe the anomaly in a woman happily married. These symptoms, light as gossamer,

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resemble the fine-spun clouds, hardly darkening the azure of the sky, which country-folk call storm-flowers: soon they take a deeper hue.

In the midst of this solemn and secret debate, when according to Mme. de Staël there seems to be more of poetry in life, some women take it into their heads, that the ideas consuming them are suggestions from the Devil; they are generally women in whom virtuous mothers, whether out of prudence or out of a sense of duty, perhaps out of true affection, perhaps out of hypocrisy, have inculcated principles, whose tenacity is now shown. You will see them running at all hours to Mass or to confession or to Heaven knows what devotions. This false piety includes the purchase of pretty prayer-books in expensive bindings, by the help of which the charming sinner endeavours to make up the arrears of religion, into which she has fallen through her devotion to the pleasures of marriage. Here let us state a principle, and grave it in letters of fire upon your memory: when a young wife suddenly takes up religious practises she had abandoned, her new interest always conceals a motive of high import for the husband's happiness. In at least seventy-nine women out of a hundred, this return to God is a sign that they have been inconsequent, or else that they are going to be.

But there is another sign, even clearer and more decisive, which every husband will recognise unless he is a complete fool. When you were both revelling in the delusive joys of the honeymoon, did not your wife always obey you, as lovingly as a mistress? Only happy in proving her devotion, she would have liked nothing better than a command from you to walk along the gutters of the roof: instantly she would have become agile as a squirrel, and you would have seen her scuttling over the tiles! And both of you took this submissiveness for love! What else could it be, that ineffable pleasure she took in sacrificing the *I*, which made her a being distinct from you? Truly she identified herself with you wholly, became *una caro*, in fulfilment of her vows at the altar. And yet, in the course of time, all this sweetness of disposition has worn off insensibly. Realising that her will has been annihilated, and wounded in her pride, your wife will try now to reconquer the lost ground; and to this she will apply herself

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with increasing energy, developing from day to day a regular system. Her watchword will be *the dignity of the married woman*. The first effect of the system will be felt in your conjugal pleasures, where it will introduce a certain reserve, a certain luke-warmness, of which you will be the best judge.

It is likely that during the honeymoon you discovered, according to the degree of your sensual passions, some few or more of those twenty-two pleasures, which were perfected in ancient Greece by twenty-two species of courtesans, each cultivating a particular branch of the same delicate art. Simple and ignorant, but at the same time curious and aspiring, your wife will have advanced some grades in this secret science, now so nearly lost, which we commend for special study to the future author of the *Physiology of Pleasure*. Then one autumn morning, like the flocks of birds fleeing from the northern cold, there is a sudden and concerted flight from your bed! Gone is the Fellatrix, fertile in coquetries, which thwart desire only to prolong its burning onset; the Tractatrix has taken wing too, seeking again the perfumed Orient, where the dreamy pleasures are held in honour. With these fly the Subagitatrix, daughter of the Ionian Isles; the Lemnian with her sweetly provoking ways; the Corinthian who could at need replace them all; and lastly the maddening Phicidissian with the playfully devouring teeth, in whose enamel the god of love has placed intelligence. One only may still remain; but an evening comes when the bright and passionate Propetis too stretches out her wings and is gone; with lowered head she flies, and like the back view of the angel leaving Abraham in the picture by Rembrandt, gives you a last ravishing glimpse of the treasures she herself has never seen, and which it has been yours alone to gaze on with rapturous cry, to flatter with caressing hand. Weaned as you now are from all the finer shades of pleasure, from the light fancies of the amorous soul, there only remains to you the simple animal act, the primitive lure of Hymen in the state of innocence, the homage by which Adam made his peace with the sex in the person of our common mother, and which doubtless suggested to the serpent the idea of teaching her more.

But a signal so plain is not given in many cases. To begin with, most marriages are too well-founded in Christianity, to follow the practises of pagan Greece. Besides, we have included

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towards the end of the catalogue such stormy pleasures as seldom disturb the calm of the marriage-bed, but are rather daughters of illegitimate passion. In the proper time and place we shall treat more fully of this interesting symptom: enough to say here, that it takes the form of an indifference, or even repugnance, which you alone are in a position to estimate.

While your wife is ennobling the marriage relations by her new-found dignity, she will claim that she has as good a right to her opinion as you to yours. "When a woman marries," she will say, "she takes no vow to surrender her reason. Are wives to be no better than slaves? Laws may bind the body, but not the mind! God has set the mind too near himself, for tyrants to lay hands on it!" These ideas must be the result of a too liberal education, which you have allowed her somehow to receive, or else of reflexions which you have allowed her to indulge in. An entire Meditation shall be devoted to *Education of the Wife*.

Then your wife begins to talk of "my" room and "my" bed; to many of your questions she will now answer, "My dear, that is no affair of yours," or else, "Men have their part in the management of a house and women have theirs." She may even make fun of men meddling in household affairs, and declare that "there are some things men understand nothing about." By the way, the number of things you understand nothing about will increase every day; till one fine day you realise, that there are *two* altars in your little church, instead of the one you both used to worship at. Your wife and you have now each your own altar, and the difference will always be growing wider, thanks to the theory of the wife's dignity.

Then will follow certain other ideas, which will be dinned into you by means of a *live force*, little understood though very ancient. The force of steam, of horses, of men or of water are good inventions; but nature has provided woman with a moral force, to which those are not to be compared: we shall call it the force of the *rattle*. Its effectiveness consists in a perpetuity of sound, in a repetition so exact of the same words, in a rotation so complete of the same ideas, that at last you will admit anything in order to escape from the discussion. Thus you will be convinced by the force of the rattle,—

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That you are very lucky to have such a good wife;

That women are often more clear-sighted than men;

That in everything you ought to ask the advice of your wife, and in nearly everything you ought to follow it;

That you ought to reverence the mother of your children, honour her and put complete trust in her;

That the best way not to be deceived is to rely on a woman's delicacy, because it is impossible for a man to prevent his wife from minotaurising him: (see here the fruit of our weakness in allowing such ideas to gain credit of old);

That his lawful wife is a man's best friend;

That a woman is mistress in her own house, queen in her own drawing-room, etc.

Let us say at once, those who decide to offer a firm resistance to these encroachments of the wife's dignity on the husband's authority are doomed, they fall into the category of the predestined! The immediate result is quarrels, which make them appear to their wives as tyrants; and a husband's tyranny is always an excellent excuse for a wife's in consequence. In these skirmishes she is able to convince her household, which is to say yours, and finally includes yourself as well as the neighbours, that you, and no one but you, is in the wrong. If on the other hand you should ever, for the sake of peace, or even for love's sake, admit the pretended rights of your wife, you give her a hold over you, that she will take advantage of for ever. A husband, like a government, should never confess to a fault. Your forces would then be out-flanked by the occult system of feminine dignity, and all would be lost; from that moment she would march from concession to concession, until finally she had driven you out of *her* bed. Woman being at once subtle and malicious, and having all the day to meditate an irony, your wife would turn you to ridicule while you were bringing up the heavy artillery of your opinions; and the day that she makes you ridiculous will see the end of your happiness. Your power will have expired; a woman who has once laughed at her husband can never again love him. To the woman who loves him a man should be full of force and grandeur, an imposing person always. The family cannot exist without despotism: nations! reflect on this.

Truly a man is in difficult case, when faced with these

Meditation VIII: First Symptoms

developments: what course is he to take? The answer to this question, which constitutes the higher politics of marriage, is precisely the subject of the second and third parts of our book. There you will find a breviary of marital Machiavellianism, from which you may learn to cultivate an airy superiority, or as Napoleon put it, to wear frills of lace on your mind; you will learn how a man may steel his soul, accept the domestic challenge and yield nothing of the empire of the will, without at the same time compromising his happiness by any display of authority. Remember that if you abdicate, your wife will despise you for this, if for nothing else; she will have found you lacking in vigour, you will no longer be a *man* to her. But it is not yet time to develop the theory, or inculcate the method by which a husband can reconcile grace of manner with sternness of attitude; we must leave the reader to imagine the importance of what is to follow, while we pursue our way by the necessary steps.

In the fatal epoch one of the things you will notice will be, that your wife is cleverly establishing her right to go out alone. You were once her god, or at least her saint: she has now arrived at a stage of devotion, which allows her to perceive holes in the robe of a saint.

"Good heavens, my dear!" said Mme. de la Vallière to her husband, "how badly you wear your sword! M. de Richelieu manages to make his hang straight at his side, you ought to try and imitate his way, there is much more style about it."

"Sweetheart, you could not have found a better way of telling me that we have now been five months married!" replied the Duke, and the reply was enough to make his name in the reign of Louis XV.

But to return to your wife, she will study your character, to find weapons for use against you. This study, this travesty of love, will bear fruit in a hundred little traps that she will set for you, occasions designed to make you scold or insult her; for when a woman lacks excuses for minotaurising her husband, she will manage to create them.

Another sign will be her sitting down to meals without waiting for you. Again, when you are both out driving, she will always be pointing things out to you, as if to suggest that you can see nothing for yourself. She will sing in your presence without

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regard for you, will interrupt when you are speaking, often will not answer you, and in a hundred other ways will make it plain that she is not overawed by you. She will try to exclude you from any part in the management of the house, and ultimately to become mistress of your fortune. At first this war will be an occasional distraction to her, in the empty or perhaps too emotional state of her mind; later her main interest will be to find in your opposition new subjects for ridicule. The regular jibes will be always on her tongue,—and in France we are so sensitive to irony! From time to time she will complain of head-aches and nervous attacks; but these symptoms must have a Meditation to themselves. In society she will speak of you without blushing, and will meet your look without lowering her eyes. She will begin to find fault with everything you do, which does not fit in with her ideas or her secret plans. She will consider your tastes less and less, will only want you to have what is correct; you are no longer her standard of comparison.

Ponder this anecdote. In imitation of Louis XIV., who would bring to his mistress the bunch of orange-flower, left on his table every morning by the head gardener at Versailles, M. de Vivonne nearly every day presented some rare flowers to his wife during the first period of their marriage. One evening he found the bunch lying on a table, instead of put in a vase of water as usual. "Oh dear!" he said, "if I am not a fool, I soon shall be."

You are away for a week and you receive no letter, or the one you receive has three blank pages. . . Symptom.

You arrive on a valuable horse that you are certainly fond of, but not to the exclusion of your happiness; and between the first and the second kiss your wife becomes anxious about the horse's corn. . . . Symptom.

These will be enough to give you the idea, you can best complete the list for yourself. We shall always try in this book to paint in fresco, leaving the miniatures for you to do. The signs that may be discerned in little daily happenings vary infinitely according to the characters of the parties; one husband will see a symptom in the manner of putting on a shawl, while another will need to have it driven into his head with a hammer, before he becomes aware of his companion's indifference.

Meditation VIII: First Symptoms

One fine morning in spring, when you are both to join an expedition into the country, or it may be after a ball you have both been to, the situation reaches its climax. Your wife is listless, legitimate pleasures have no longer any attraction for her; her senses, her imagination, a natural caprice in her, all alike call for a lover. But as yet she dares not embark on an intrigue, of which the consequences frighten her, and the details perhaps disgust. You still stand for something; you weigh in the balance, though very little. In the other tray sits the lover, loaded with all the attractions of novelty, with all the charms of the unknown. In your wife's heart the strife is no longer between you and an idea, a real enemy is in the field, and the danger both for you and for her is so much the greater. But soon, the greater the risks to be run, the more she burns to throw herself into the delicious abyss, where fears and joys, agonies and rapturous sensations, shall all in turn possess her. Her mind takes fire, and in an upward stream of sparks she sees her future life, soaring into realms of mystery and romance. She feels that the tone of existence has already been raised, in her solemn struggle for the rights of woman; she trembles with excitement, all her being is in commotion. She lives more intensely than ever before, and judges of the future by the present. The very pleasures you have given her are now charges against you; they were attempts to beguile her from the pleasures of the future, on which she is now wholly set. What chance have you and your offering of happiness, against the prejudices of the imagination, all favouring the lover whom the law forbids? To sum all up, she finds joy in her terrors, and terrors in her joys. She loves the imminent danger, which to you also is a sword of Damocles, hung above your head by your own hand; and is it surprising if she prefers the delirious agonies of passion to a conjugal inanity, surely worse than death, to formal sentiments that were rather the suppression of all sentiment?

Young man! you who perhaps have to go and make columns of figures at the Ministry of Finance, or check accounts at some bank, or report prices on the Stock Exchange, or make speeches in the House; you who, like so many others, ardently repeated the vow mentioned in our first Meditation, to defend your happiness by defending your wife: what can you oppose to desires so natural in her? Yes, natural! for to these creatures of fire to live is to

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feel; from the moment they are without emotion they are dead. The physical law, by which you have power to walk, produces in her this involuntary minotaurism. As d'Alembert said, it is a corollary of the laws of movement! Well, where are your defences? Where, we ask! Beware! if your wife has not yet put the apple to her lips, the serpent has spoken to her; and you are sleeping. We come to awaken you; and now our book begins.

Without inquiring how many husbands, among the half million with whom this work is concerned, must be classed as predestined, how many chose their wives badly, how many made a bad start with their wives, in short, without seeking to know whether there are few or many of all that number, qualified to combat the approaching danger, we propose in the second part to set forth the tactics, by which alone the Minotaur may be slain and the virtue of wives preserved intact. If fate or the devil, opportunity or a celibate, has already compassed your ruin, it may be some consolation to you to assist at battles in defence of other marriages, and to hold in your hand the thread which might have guided you out of the labyrinth. Many men are of so cheerful a disposition, that when shown their error, when taught the why and the how, they scratch their heads a moment, then rub their hands and march off, quite content!

Meditation IX: Epilogue

MEDITATION IX: EPILOGUE.

FAITHFUL to our promise, this first part has declared the general causes operating in every marriage, and has described the crisis to which they bring it; also in these conjugal prolegomena we have pointed to a way of escape from the evil, in stating the errors by which it is engendered. But would not our preliminary discourse be incomplete, if after trying to shed some light on the inconsequence of prevailing ideas (especially as expressed in laws and morals), relative to a question touching the life of nearly every being, we did not attempt to establish in a short peroration, what are the political causes of this social infirmity? And after denouncing the secret vices of marriage, would it not be philosophical to inquire, how our moral code has made that institution vicious?

The laws which govern marriage to-day in France, and the morals which govern women, are alike the fruit of ancient beliefs and traditions, not informed by the eternal principles of reason and justice, which were revealed in the great Revolution of 1789. Three great events agitated France in ancient times, the Roman conquest, the conversion to Christianity and the invasion of the Franks; and each of these commotions has left its mark deeply in both laws and morals, in the character of the nation and in the very soil of the country.

Greece, having one foot in Europe and the other in Asia, and being influenced by a passionate climate, chose to take her conjugal institutions from the Orient; her legislators, like her poets and philosophers, went to Egypt and Chaldea for inspiration, eagerly studying their veiled antiquities. The strict seclusion of women, necessitated by the effect of the sun in Asia, was the basis of law in Greece and Ionia; wives remained safe within the marble walls of the gynæceum. National territory being limited to the small area sufficient to supply a town, the courtesans, then an honourable retinue attached to religion and the arts, were able to satisfy the youthful passions of a small male population; whose energies

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were anyhow largely absorbed in the hard physical exercises, that formed part of the military training in those heroic times.

Rome in turn, having gone to Greece for principles of law suitable to the skies of Italy, stamped the brow of married women with the seal of complete servitude. The Senate knew the importance of virtue in a republic, and the means it found to enforce a strict moral code was excessive development of marital and paternal authority. The dependence of woman was graven on the life of the country. Oriental seclusion became a duty, a moral obligation, virtue itself. Hence the temples raised to Modesty, and the shrines consecrated to holy Marriage; hence the censors, the dotal institution, the sumptuary laws, the respect for matrons, and all the tendencies of Roman law and custom. A rape, or an attempted rape, amounted to a revolution; the appearance of women in politics was a historic event, marked by solemn decrees. The famous Roman matrons, condemned to be no more than wives and mothers, passed their lives in retreat, occupied in bringing up masters for the world. Rome had no courtesans, for the youth of the nation were occupied in eternal wars. If dissolute habits came in later, it was only with the despotism of the Emperors; and even then the prejudices derived from ancient morals were so strong, that Rome never saw women on the stage. These facts must not be lost sight of, even in so rapid a history of marriage in France.

Having conquered the Gauls, the Romans imposed their laws on them; but they could not destroy the profound respect of our ancestors for women, or the ancient superstition which made women the organs of divinity. However, the laws of Rome were at last established to the exclusion of all others, at least in the districts formerly known as the country of *written law*, what had been *Gallia togata*; and as far as marriage was concerned, Roman ideas penetrated more or less into the country of *customary law*.

It was during this struggle between law and custom, that the Franks invaded our country, the race which gave to it the dear name of France. These warriors, issuing from the north, imported a native system of gallantry, in which the sexes mixed freely; for their frozen climate demanded

Meditation IX: Epilogue

none of the jealous precautions of the Orient, no plurality of enslaved wives. On the contrary, their women were almost deified, and being freely admitted to conversation, added a glow to private life by the warmth of their sentiments. If the senses slept in the Northern cold, passion sought expression in this other contact, at once energetic and delicate; here was diversity of movement in thought and speech, provocation of the mind instead of the body; and so arose coquetry with its system of fanciful delays, that happy product of the temperate skies of France, of whose principles we have given some hints in the first part.

To the Orient passion and its delirium; the long brown locks and bodies made for love, pomp of the harem, poetic tales and monuments of the past! To the Occident the liberty of women, and sovereignty of blond heads; the arts of gallantry, ecstasies of the soul, sweet emotions of melancholy and languorous love, spells of fays and sorceresses! These two temperaments, originating in two quarters of the globe, met for conflict in France; the Southern half, distinguished in old days by the *langue-d'oc*, was the stronghold of Oriental ideas, while the country of the *langue-d'oïl* preserved the northern tradition of magic virtue in women. In Northern France to this day, love demands mysteries; in the South, to see is to love.

When the conflict was at its height, Christianity came and triumphed in France; and it came preached by women, it came proclaiming the divinity of a woman: who at last, under the name of Our Lady, took the place of a Druidic idol, shrined in the hollows of old oaks. If the religion of Christ, which before everything is a moral and political code, gave a soul to all beings, proclaimed their equality before God and so confirmed the ideas of Northern chivalry, the advantage to this party was balanced by the residence of the sovereign pontiff at Rome. If the Pope inherited the imperial power, it was largely through the universality of the Latin tongue, which became that of Europe in the Middle Ages; but also through the energy with which monks, scribes and men of law applied themselves to gaining acceptance for the codes, found by a soldier at the sack of Amalfi. Thus the two ideas, sovereignty and servitude of women, still faced one another, the forces of each increased by new supports.

When the legal fallacy known as the Salic Law established

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the civil and political servitude of women, it did not destroy the power which a Northern code of morals gave them; their power was sustained in the face of the law by the enthusiasm for the ideas of chivalry, then possessing Europe. Thus arose the strange contradiction between our national character and our laws, which continues to this day. For since those early ages, which seem to have been so pregnant with the spirit of the Revolution,—that great philosophic awakening which has given us at last a clear survey of history—France has been torn by many convulsions; Feudalism, the Crusades, the Reformation, the strife between Royalty and Aristocracy, and lastly despotism and priestcraft, these in turn have all struck their talons so deep into her, that poor forgotten woman has remained wedged between the contradictory influences of those three early events we have sketched. Could any attention be given to woman and marriage, or to the remote question of her political education, when Feudalism was challenging the rights of the throne, when the Reformation was threatening to sweep away both, and when even the People were forgotten in the rivalry of Church and Empire? As Mme. Necker has well put it, women on their rough journey down the road of history have been like the padding of wool put in cases of porcelain; they have counted for nothing, yet all would have been broken without them. All along, the married woman in France has presented the spectacle of a Queen in chains, of a slave on holiday.

There is no end to the social anomalies produced in the past by the strife of these two irreconcilable ideas, the Oriental and the Occidental. The physical nature of woman being little understood, an illness would be taken for a portent, if not for demoniac possession, giving powers of sorcery. And this creature, treated by the law as an irresponsible infant, was deified by established morals! Like the freedmen of the emperors, she disposed of crowns and of fortunes, decided the issue of battles, organised revolutions and crimes, or inspired virtue, and all by the glance of a passionate eye; for she possessed nothing, not even herself. Women might be called equally fortunate and unfortunate in their position: armed with weakness, strong in mere instinct, they would break out of the sphere decreed for them by law; only to prove themselves powerless for good, while all-powerful for

Meditation IX: Epilogue

evil. No credit was allowed them for virtues imposed upon them, and consequently no excuse for vices they indulged in; deprived of education, they were taunted with ignorance; while not altogether mothers, neither were they altogether wives. Having all the day to brood on love, they practised the coquetry of the Franks, though confined as Romans to castles, in which their business was to bring up warriors. Neither system being definitely established in law, every woman followed the bent of her nature; there were as many Marion Delormes as Cornelias, virtue had its following and so had vice; in short, the sex was as indefinite as the laws which governed it. One party in the state regarded woman as a creature intermediate between men and animals, that is to say, as a beast the more dangerous for its share of intellect, which could not be too securely chained by the laws: thus it should minister to the good pleasure of men, the purpose for which it was intended by nature, like other beasts! Another party regarded woman as an exiled angel, the source of all happiness; she was the only creature capable of realising the aspirations of man, whose highest privilege was to adore her, and to avenge in every possible way her wrongs in this world. How could there be unity of morals, when there was this difference in politics?

The character of woman was that which men and social conditions imposed on her, instead of being a natural product of the climate, tenderly guarded by the laws. Married against her will by the paternal authority of the Romans, virtually sold, she no sooner entered the seclusion of a marital despotism, than she found herself solicited to make the only reprisals possible to her. And so she became dissolute, when men ceased to be occupied in civil wars; her virtue had only meant lack of temptation. Every man of experience can give the picture its finer tints, we are concerned with the lessons and not with the poetry of events.

The Revolution was too occupied in destroying and in building main walls, or in combating its various opponents, to inquire into the place due to woman in the social structure; even so perhaps some attention might have been given to the question, had not the scandals of the Regency and the reign of Louis XV. been so fresh in men's minds. The great men who raised the immortal monument of our codes were almost all jurists of the old school, impressed with the importance of Roman law; anyhow,

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their work was to reform rather than to create institutions. True sons of the Revolution, they believed that a wisely restricted law of divorce, with the right it gave to bring humble suits, provided sufficient remedy; compared with the old order of things, the establishment of this court seemed a daring advance. To-day the two ideas of women have lost much of their force, as a result of the many new influences to which the nation has been exposed in the course of its history: in the general progress of understanding, what was a blind conflict has become a question for the determination of wise legislators. There is much to be learnt from the past, and now is the time to profit by its lessons: shall it be said, the eloquence of facts was lost on us?

Seraglios and eunuchs were the natural development of the Oriental idea; the bastard morals of France have produced the twin evils of courtesans and of marriage as we know it: the difference has been well summed up in the saying of a contemporary, that, in the name of paternity, the Orient sacrifices men and justice, France women and modesty. Neither has attained the end, which alone their institutions should have aimed at, namely happiness. Man has been no more loved as lord of a harem, than as husband he is sure of being the father of his children: certainly, marriage is not worth what it costs. It is time to cease making sacrifices to this institution, and to lay the foundations of a greater pyramid of happiness in the social state, by adapting our morals and institutions to our climate. The success of constitutional government, that happy blend of two principles so extreme as despotism and democracy, seems to indicate the expediency of combining also the two conjugal principles, which hitherto have conflicted in France. The liberty we boldly claim for unmarried women is the only remedy for that mass of evils, which we have now traced to their origin in the contradictions of a semi-oriental slavery. Let us restore to youth its natural passions, love with its joys and terrors, the art of coquetry and all the charming characteristics of the Franks; in that spring-time of life no fault is irreparable, the bride will come out of the test armed with confidence, disarmed of hate, and marriage will be fortified by past experience.

In such a revolution of morals, the shameful sore of prostitution will dry up naturally. It is just amid the candour and timidity

Meditation IX: Epilogue

of youth, that a man is capable of great and true passions, and has the will to control them for his happiness. The soul is happy in its efforts, whatever they may be; let it have action and movement, and there will be no fear of corruption setting in. Here is an observation that anyone might have made, but it provides a key to peace and happiness, which legislators seem all to have missed. There is further security in the fact, that to-day the passion for study is so developed, that the most hot-blooded Mirabeau can spend his forces harmlessly between love and the sciences. Many a young man has been saved from debauchery by some stubborn task, added to the obstacles in the way of a first, a pure love: for what young woman does not desire to prolong the tender infancy of love, does not rebel against being possessed and known? To the doubtful pleasures offered by a lover, young and inexperienced as herself, she can oppose the delicious tremors of her soul, in its secret and modest communing with love. The gallantry of the Franks, their free and equal loves, should be the glorious heritage of our youth; then we should see naturally coming together those affinities of soul, of mind, of character, of habit, of temperament, which produce the equilibrium necessary for the happiness of husband and wife. And if daughters were disqualified from inheriting, at least beyond a limit to be carefully decided, and also had to be married without dowry as in the United States, our system would rest on a basis yet larger and freer; for men would thus be deprived of motive for choosing any but those whose attraction lay in their virtues, their characters or talents.

Afterwards, the Roman system might fairly be applied to the married women, seeing that as girls they would have enjoyed liberty. Having sole responsibility for the early education of their children, that highest of all a mother's duties, they should be occupied at all times in creating and maintaining for themselves that happiness, so admirably described in the fourth book of *Julie*; thus each in her own house would be, as were the matrons of ancient Rome, a live image of the Providence, which is at work everywhere but is nowhere seen. The law as to a wife's infidelity will then be very severe; but the penalty actually inflicted will not be so great as the infamy attaching to it. France has seen women made to ride on asses through the streets, as a punishment

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for alleged witchcraft; and often an innocent woman died of the shame. It is on this principle the future laws of marriage will be enforced. Certain young women of Miletus attempted to escape marriage by death: the Senate condemns the virgins to be dragged naked on a hurdle, the would-be suicides are sentenced to life.

It is certain that women and marriage will never be respected in France, before our system of morals undergoes that radical change we plead for; this is the central thought of the two most beautiful productions of an immortal genius, *Emile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse* are only two other and more eloquent pleas for the same change. That voice will echo down the ages because it announces the true springs of laws and morals in all ages. In subjecting children to their mothers and charging the mothers with their instruction, in this alone Jean-Jacques rendered great service to the cause of virtue; but his age was too deeply gangrened, to receive the high teaching of those two poems. It is only fair to add, that the poet in him at last banished the philosopher; for in leaving in the heart of *Julie* some traces of her first love, he was seduced by a poetic idea, more touching certainly than the truth he set out to reveal, but less useful.

However, if marriage in France is designed, through the secret influence of bachelors, to give for them more savour to the passions, by hedging woman about with mystery and danger, or if woman was intended by nature to be a drawing-room ornament, a doll to display fashions, a walking clothes-peg, rather than a person having functions in the political order, on whose fulfilment the prosperity of a country and its glory depend, a person whose efforts can rival in utility those of man's. . . Ah! if this last is but a vain dream, then I confess, all our theories, so long and carefully considered, must be swept away to give place to those higher destinies of woman, the higher harlotries!

But we have pressed sufficiently the lees of past events, to get our drop of philosophy; we have given space enough to the modern passion for the historic: let us turn our gaze again upon the morals of to-day. Let us don once more the cap-and-bells, and wave the bauble that in Rabelais' hand became a sceptre; then let us pursue this analysis, without giving to a jest more gravity than it can carry, or to grave matters more gaiety than is becoming.

SECOND PART:

The Means of Defense; At Home and Abroad

"TO BE OR NOT TO BE."—*Shakespeare.*

Meditation X: Marital Politics

MEDITATION X: MARITAL POLITICS.

WHEN a man arrives at the situation defined in the first part of this book, we must assume that the thought of his wife being possessed by another can still stir his heart, and that he will spring to the defence of his property, if only out of self-conceit or self-interest; for if he were indifferent to the loss of his wife he would be a poor sort of man indeed, and would deserve his fate.

In this prolonged crisis it is difficult for a husband not to make mistakes, especially as most men are as little skilled in the art of governing a woman, as in the art of choosing one: yet marital politics consists in little more than the constant application of three principles. The first is never to believe what a woman says; the second is to look always for the motive of her actions, without attending to their rightness or wrongness; the third is to remember, that woman is never so talkative as when she is silent, and never acts with more energy than when she is resting. You are like a rider mounted on a roguish horse: who must always be watching its ears, or he will be taken unawares and thrown. But it is not so much in knowing the principles, as in the manner of applying them, that the art of marriage lies; to teach them to a fool would be like putting a razor into the hand of a monkey. The first and most vital of your duties is perpetual dissimulation, and it is one that nearly all husbands neglect. When they perceive a minotauric symptom in their wives, most men at once display their mistrust, in a way that is highly insulting. They develop a sarcastic tone and manner; while the fear in their souls is like a jet of gas in a glass globe, shining through their faces and giving away the reason of their behaviour.

Remember that a woman has twelve hours more than you in the day, in which to reflect on what she sees; sooner or later she will find the key to your cipher, and will read the suspicions in your face almost as soon as they form in your mind. And she will take them as a gratuitous injury, never to be pardoned. No remedy exists, the harm is done forever; to-morrow, if a chance

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offers, she ranges herself with the inconsequent wives. You ought therefore, when the war has reached this stage, to affect towards your wife such boundless confidence, as you hardly ever had in her. Only be careful not to overdo the honeyed words, or you are lost; she will not believe you, for she has her politics as you have yours. There must still be a subtle roughness in your endearments, if she is to imbibe, without her suspicions being aroused, that precious sense of security, which shall encourage her as a horse to shake her ears, and allow you at the right moment to use either bridle or spur.

But what an idea to compare a horse, of all creatures the most guileless, to a being liable to spasms of thought and organic convulsions, such as to produce in her any character at any moment! Behold her now more prudent than Fra Paolo the Augustinian, most terrible of all counsellors to the Ten at Venice; now more insincere than a king, more crafty than Louis XI; now more profound than Machiavelli; now sophistical as Hobbes, subtle as Voltaire; now simpler than Mamolin's betrothed, mistrusting no one in the whole world but—you! Ah! you will need to practise such dissimulation, as will make the springs of your conduct invisible as those of the universe, and for this you will need to have obtained absolute empire over yourself. But diplomatic imperturbability, the quality on which M. de Talleyrand so prided himself, will be only the foundation of your character; an exquisite politeness, a true grace of manner, must inform all your conversation with the lady. Your professor strictly forbids the use of the whip in riding, when it is a case of managing a spirited Andalusian.

LXI. LET A MAN BEAT HIS MISTRESS, IT IS AN INJURY; BUT HIS WIFE! IT IS SUICIDE.

What! a state without police? a government without armed forces? Yes, that is just the problem, that we shall try to solve in the Meditation to follow. But we have two preliminary observations to submit to you; they will provide two other theories, applicable to all the methods we shall recommend. Wait! a living example will be refreshing, amid these arid dissertations; it will be like coming out of the book to move about on the earth.

Meditation X: Marital Politics

One bright January morning in the year 1822, I was walking up the Paris boulevards toward the elegant regions of the *Chaussée d'Antin*, having started from the sombre spheres of the *Marais*; and on my way I observed for the first time, not without a philosophic pleasure, the regular degradation of physiognomy and dress, marking the stages from the *Pas de la Maule* to the *Madeleine*: they make a distinct world of each section of the boulevard, and of all this zone of Paris a great variegated pattern of morals. I was at that time blissfully ignorant of life, but confident that one day I should succeed in the presumptuous attempt I was already set on, namely to stand forth as the legislator of marriage. Just then I was on my way to have lunch with an old college friend, who all too soon had encumbered himself with a wife and two children. But as it happened that my old mathematical tutor lived near by, I determined to pay a visit to the worthy professor, before taking my fill of the delights of friendship. I was ushered into a study at the back of the house, in which the dust lying on everything bore witness to the honourable preoccupation of the learned man. But a surprise was in store for me; I had not noticed on entering, that seated on the arm of a chair, as if mounted on an English thoroughbred, was a very pretty woman. She screwed up her mouth in that conventional smile, reserved by the lady of the house for persons she is not acquainted with; but she did not disguise as well as she ought to have the sulky mood, which possessed her at the time of my arrival: I was able to see that my visit was inopportune. Deep in an equation doubtless, my master had not looked up; so I lifted a doubtful right hand toward the lady, much as a fish moves its fin, then withdrew on my heels, at the same time giving her a mysterious smile, which might be translated, "I at least will not be the one to hinder you from an infidelity to the *Venus of intellect*." She let her head give one of those slight movements, of a charming vivacity quite untranslatable.

"Here, my dear friend, don't go!" cried the geometer, "that is my wife."

I saluted afresh!—Oh Coulon! why were you not there to applaud the only one of your pupils who has ever understood, and only then for the first time, the epithet *Anacreontic* as applied by you to a bow? The effect must have been striking, for Mrs. Professor, as the Germans say, blushed and rose hurriedly to go

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out, at the same time giving me a nod which seemed to say, "Adorable person!"

Her husband stopped her, saying, "Stay, my child; it's one of my pupils."

The young wife, still standing by the door, now put her head forward appealingly toward the professor, like a fledgling on a branch opening its mouth for a worm.

"I tell you, it's impossible!" said the husband with a sigh, "I'll prove it to you by algebra."

"Really, please, let us leave it now!" she answered, indicating me with her eyes.

If it had been a matter of Algebra, my tutor would have understood the look, but it was Chinese to him, and he went on: "My child, judge for yourself: we have an income of ten thousand francs. . ."

At these words I retired towards the door and began examining some water-colours, as if seized by a passion for them: my discretion was rewarded by an eloquent glance. Poor woman, she did not know that I was qualified to play the part of Long-ears in Fortunio, the man who could hear the truffles growing!

"The principles of domestic economy," continued the professor, "forbid the allocation of more than one fifth of income to rent and wages; now our flat and our servants cost us together two thousand francs, so that our expenditure there is right up to the limit. Item, I allow you twelve hundred francs to dress on." In saying this he dwelt on each syllable. "Your kitchen consumes four thousand francs, the children at least five hundred, while I for myself only take eight hundred. Then there is laundry, then fire and light,—say another thousand for these; and there remains, you see, no more than six hundred francs, which has never been enough for unforeseen expenses. So to buy that diamond cross, I should have to take a thousand francs out of capital; and once we start on that path, my sweetheart, it will be a case of leaving this Paris that you love: we should be obliged to retire into the country to recover our lost fortune. Think, too, how the children are adding to our expenses every day! My dear, be sensible."

"It's all very reasonable," she said, "but you will be the only man in Paris, who has given no New Year's present to his

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wife." And she made her escape like a schoolboy, who has just finished an imposition.

My tutor tossed his head with satisfaction. When he saw that the door was shut, he rubbed his hands, and we talked for a while of the war with Spain; then I took my leave, went on to the Rue de Provence, no more thinking that I had received the first half of a great conjugal lesson, than I was thinking of the conquest of Constantinople by General Diebitsch. I reached the house of my Amphitryon, just as husband and wife were sitting down to lunch: they had waited for me the half-hour, prescribed by the ecumenical discipline of gastronomy as well as of hospitality.

I think it was in the act of opening a *pâté de foie gras*, that my pretty hostess said to her husband in a deliberate tone: "Alexander, if you were a dear, you would give me that pair of ear-rings we saw in Fossin's window."

"They're yours, my love!" cried my friend cheerily, as he took from his pocket-book three notes, each of a thousand francs, and waved them before the sparkling eyes of his wife. "I can no more resist the pleasure of giving them to you, than you can the pleasure of taking them. By the way, to-day's the anniversary of our first meeting, the diamonds will be a memento!"

"Go on!" she said, with a ravishing smile. The next minute she thrust two fingers down the front of her dress, and drew out a bunch of violets, which she threw at my friend's nose, with a pretty imitation of childish spite. Alexander handed her the price of the ear-rings, crying gaily, "I meant to have those violets!" I shall never forget the quick movement, at once gay and greedy, with which the little wife clutched the notes, like a cat putting its dappled paw on a mouse. Blushing with pleasure she folded them up, and slipped them into her bosom, still scented by the violets.

I could not help thinking of my mathematical tutor. The only difference I saw then between his pupil and him was that one was thrifty and the other prodigal; little did I suspect, that the one who in appearance was the better calculator was not so in reality. The lunch went off pleasantly, as you may imagine. Afterwards we went into a brightly furnished little sitting-room, and there, ensconced in easy chairs before a lively fire, which

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seemed to caress the dry branches consolingly till they blossomed as in spring, I was moved to address to the loving couple a complimentary remark on the furnishing of this little oratory.

"The pity is it cost so much," said my friend, "but one must make the nest worthy of the bird! Only I wish you would not compliment me on possessions that aren't paid for! you have interfered with my digestion, reminding me that I still owe two thousand francs to a damned upholsterer!"

At this the mistress of the house inventoried the pretty parlour with a sweeping glance, and her bright face became thoughtful. Alexander took my arm and drew me into a window-bay. "Do you happen to have a thousand francs you could lend me?" he said in a low voice, "I have only ten to twelve thousand a year, and this year. . ."

"Alexander!" cried the sweet creature, interrupting her husband; and coming up to us she held out the three notes. "Alexander. . . I see it's madness!"

"Will you mind your own business?" he answered playfully, "keep your money!"

"But, my love, I am ruining you!"

"Keep it, darling; it is a lawful prize! Bah! I shall gamble this winter, and win more than that!"

"Gamble?" she cried, with a look of terror, "Alexander, take back your notes! Really; I mean it."

"No, no!" said my friend, as he pushed away the little white hand.

"I will think about what you were asking me," I said to my friend, and with a bow to his wife I slipped out: but I knew from this scene, only the preparation for a much tenderer, that Anacreontic bows would produce little effect here. At the same time I thought to myself, "He must be mad to talk of a thousand francs to a law student!"

Five days later I was a guest of Mme. de —, whose balls were becoming very fashionable. Amid the glitter of quadrilles, I recognised first my friend's wife and then the mathematician's. Mrs. Alexander wore a charming costume, composed of nothing more costly than some white muslin and a few flowers; while on her breast was a simple Jeannette cross, hanging from a ribbon of black velvet which set off admirably the whiteness of her skin:

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in her ears were pear-shaped drops of plain gold. Mrs. Professor wore on her breast a superb cross of diamonds.

"That's a funny thing!" said I to a personage, who had not yet read in the great book of the world, or unravelled a single female heart. The personage was myself. Now if I offered myself as partner to each of these ladies in turn, I was only so bold because I had found a topic of conversation. "Well, Madam, you got your cross!" I said to the professor's lady.

"I earned it well!" she answered, with an indefinable smile.

"What! no diamonds in your ears?" I said to the other.

"Ah!" she said, "I enjoyed them for the whole of lunch-time. . . You see, I converted Alexander in the end!"

"There wasn't really much difficulty, I expect?"

She gave me a look of triumph. It was only after eight years that this scene, which I had smiled at and forgotten, suddenly came back to me full of meaning; then by the light of chandeliers and amid the blaze of tiaras, I read its moral clearly. Woman has a horror of being convinced! Do not argue, but woo; and she will fall into the submissive attitude assigned to her by nature. To let herself be won is a triumph for woman; exact reasonings only irritate her, they kill the woman in her. You must know how to use the power she herself uses so often, the power of sympathy. It is therefore in his wife that a man may see more easily than in himself the degree of his own despotism. As for diamonds, it is only necessary to oppose the desire to itself. In conclusion we may remark, that to know how to offer ear-rings, so as to ensure their being given back, is a secret of value in every situation of life. Now let us pass on to the next consideration.

"Who knows how to administer one pound can be trusted with a hundred thousand," says an Indian proverb; for our part, we would amplify the wisdom of the Asiatic thus: "Who knows how to govern a woman can govern a nation." There is in fact a remarkable correspondence between the two kinds of government, the political methods of husbands are almost exactly those of kings. Do we not see both trying to keep their subjects amused, while they deprive them of liberty; throwing food at their head for a day, to make them forget the misery of a year; preaching

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to them against theft, while plundering them; and piously exclaiming, "If I were in your place, I should find it easy to be virtuous?"

The political precedent, which all husbands should follow in their homes, is furnished by England. All who have eyes must have noticed, that from the moment *governmentability* is ripe in that country, the Whigs lose power and a long Tory ministry succeeds; the Whig orators are like rats gnawing a rotten panel, in which the hole will be stopped as soon as they smell the nuts and lard in the royal cupboard. Your wife is the Whig party in your little state. In the situation we have supposed, she will naturally aspire to wrest from you more than one privilege. Shut your eyes to her intrigues and cabals, let her waste her energy in climbing up half the steps to your throne; then, when she thinks to snatch the sceptre, take hold of her gently, and with infinite delicacy send her head over heels to the bottom! not forgetting to cry, "Bravo! you may succeed next time!" The refined malice of this system gives double force to the overthrow of your wife, by whatever means you may choose to effect it. Well, such are the general principles by which a husband should be guided, if he wishes to avoid political errors in his little realm.

With all due respect to the minority in the Council of Macon—Montesquieu says somewhere, having had a vision perhaps of constitutional government, that the judgment of minorities is always the truer—we shall differ from them so far as to distinguish in woman a soul and a body: we now proceed to examine the means by which a husband may become master of her moral part. The functions of the mind, whatever anyone may say, are nobler than those of the body, and so the science of hygiene must wait.

Meditation XI: Education of a Wife

MEDITATION XI: EDUCATION OF A WIFE.

TO educate or not to educate, that is the question; and of all which have confronted us, it is the only one admitting of but two answers: there is no middle course between the yes and the no in this case, no modification of their extremity. Knowledge and ignorance, these are the two irreconcilable terms of the problem. Between these two dangers we seem to see Louis XVIII., weighing the felicities of the thirteenth century against the enlightenment of the nineteenth: seated in the middle of the beam, which he knew so well how to tip by his own weight, he regards at one end the fanatical ecstasy of an ignorant friar, the brute contentment of a serf, but also the spark struck from the hoof of a herald's caparisoned steed; he seems to hear the knightly battle-cry, "France and Mountjoy St. Denis!" Then he turns and smiles grimly to see a manufacturer, riding in pomp at the head of a company of the National Guard; he sees the elegant carriage of a stock-broker pass, while a peer of France in a drab suit takes his son to the Polytechnic for his schooling; then there are the strange materials, the newspapers and the steam-engines; finally he drinks his coffee from a cup, in the bottom of which a crowned N can still be distinguished.

"Down with civilisation! down with thought!" that will be your cry. Yes, you may well have a horror of education for women, for the reason so well understood in Spain, that it is easier to govern a nation of idiots than a nation of scholars. A people brutalised is happy: it may not have the joys of liberty, but neither has it the storms and anxieties; it lives as the corals live, like them it can divide into two or three whole organisms, each a people ready to be governed by the first individual armed with the baton of religion, and as blind as itself. And what produces this human marvel? Ignorance, simply! by that alone is despotism maintained, whose necessary conditions are darkness and silence.

Happiness in a household, as in a nation, is negative; it is rather the absence of unhappiness. In an absolute monarchy that the people should be loyal is perhaps less unnatural, than that

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a wife should be faithful when she has no longer any love for her husband. Now we know that with you, love at this moment has one foot on the window-sill: how necessary for you then, to exercise the salutary rigours, by which M. de Metternich prolongs his *status quo*! Only we advise you to show a little more tact and grace, for your wife is cleverer than all the Germans, while she is at least as voluptuous as the Italians.

Firstly, you will put off as long as possible letting her have a book to read, for it will be a fatal day when that happens. But here you will have no trouble; you need only speak contemptuously from time to time of *blue-stockings*; and if she still ask for a book, you will explain to her kindly, in what ridicule pedantic females are held among our neighbours. Also you will mention repeatedly, that the wittiest as well as the most charming women in the world are the Parisians, none of whom ever opens a book;

That what Mascarille said of men of quality is also true of women, they know everything without ever having learned anything;

That a woman need only listen to the conversation of men of talent, either at dances or at the card-table, and without appearing to pay too much attention she can pick up ready-made such phrases as will pass for learning in Paris;

That in this country, judgments on men and things are passed from hand to hand freely, and the little tone of decisiveness with which a woman repeats these, whether it be to crown a poet or to dismiss a painter, has more force than a decree in the courts;

That women are mirrors, reflecting naturally the most beautiful ideas;

That mother wit is everything, and what one learns by observation a truer education than any which reading can give;

And lastly, that reading makes the eyes dull and heavy-looking.

Good heavens! to let a woman read whatever books she might be led by the nature of her mind to choose? you would be dropping a spark into a powder magazine! Do you want to teach your wife to do without you; do you want to provide her with an imaginary world, a paradise where you will be a hated intruder? Consider what sort of books women read! Novels, and the most passionate of those; or perhaps the confessions of Jean-Jacques,—any

Meditation XI: Education of a Wife

work that acts powerfully on the emotions. They care nothing for reason, nothing for the ripe fruits of the mind.

Have you ever thought of the results, produced by such poetic reading? Novels, indeed all books to some extent, paint life in colours far more brilliant than those of nature, and it has the effect of fascinating the reader. But the origin of this is less a desire in the author, such as you might expect, to display the refinements of his idealism, than an unconscious tendency in the human mind generally. It is the nature of man to purify whatever passes through the factories of thought; the beauty of sculpture and architecture, whence does it come but from the mind of the artist? In literature the reader joins in the conspiracy against truth, his mind either accepting with no more protest than a mirror the images presented to it, or being fired to creative fiction itself. What man or woman, in reading the confessions of Jean-Jacques, has not envisaged Mme. de Warens more beautiful than she truly was? The soul seems to embrace poetic forms as things half known, that it has had glimpses of under bluer skies; the creations of another soul become for it wings, on which to fly away to its home in space. Be an idea ever so rare, the soul of the reader will further refine it, in making it its own; the most poetic images, when thus reflected, become even purer. To read is to co-operate in creation. There is a transubstantiation of ideas, a mysterious operation of the instinct, suggesting a vocation to destinies higher than we know; as if in our unconscious depths there were a tradition of lost glory. What must that life have been, when its ruins hold for us such joys!

Consider now: when a woman, a creature more susceptible to exaltation even than we, reads novels or dramas, what raptures may she not experience! She creates for herself an ideal world, beside which all reality pales; nevertheless she will attempt to realise this life of magic pleasures, imagining she has only to break out of her daily round. Unconsciously she passes from the spirit to the letter, from the soul to the senses. And you will be cheerfully believing, that the manners and sentiments of a man like you, who spends most of his time in eating and drinking, in dressing and undressing, is a figure to rival in the eyes of your wife the heroes of these books, the ideal lovers, on whose garments the fair reader sees neither spot nor stain! Pathetic fool in your blind security!

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too late, alas! for your happiness and hers, your wife will find that the sentiments of poetry are as rare in life as are the figures of sculpture!

Many husbands will find it embarrassing to forbid their wives to read; some will even pretend that the practise is to be encouraged, since at least they know what their wives are doing when they are reading. Wait, you will learn in the next Meditation how a sedentary life affects a woman: nothing makes her so bellicose! If you want an example to follow, have you never met Dryasdust, who for lack of poetry in himself reduces the life of his poor wife to a mechanical round, in which she is a senseless cog-wheel? Listen to the conversation of this great man, learn by heart the admirable reasoning in which he condemns poetry and all pleasures of the imagination!

But if after all your efforts your wife still persist in her demand for books, suddenly put as many as you can at her disposal, give her all sorts, from her child's A.B.C. even to *René*, a more dangerous book in her hands than *Thérèse Philosophe*. By giving her tedious books, you could of course disgust her with reading for ever; you could make a complete idiot of her with *Marie Alacoque*, *La Brosse de Pénitence*, or a volume of the songs fashionable under Louis XV.: but there is no need, for presently we shall introduce you to ways of occupying your wife's time, that will leave her none for reading of any sort.

You want to turn your wife from a passing taste for knowledge? well, see how the established method of educating women has played into your hands; observe with what admirable stupidity women justify the manipulation, to which their minds are subjected in France. We deliver them to nurses and governesses, who have twenty tricks of coquetry and false modesty to teach them, to one true or noble idea; they are brought up as slaves, and given no higher aim than to imitate their grandmothers, the only occupations allowed them being to breed canaries, to compose herbals, to water little Bengal roses, to cover a pattern with embroidery or to sew collars for themselves. A girl at the age of ten may have sharper wits than a boy of twenty, but she is timid and awkward; she will scream at sight of a spider, will giggle when spoken to, and will be thinking always of trinkets. Ten years later is it a wonder if she can only talk of fashions, and lacks the character to be either a watchful mother or a faithful wife?

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Such is the course of instruction; the most useful thing girls are taught is to colour engravings or to embroider scarves, work that might earn them eight sous a day! French history they learn in the Questions of *Le Ragois*, chronology in the *Tables du Citoyen Chantreau*, while as for geography, their young imaginations are left to make their own maps of the world. The object in all this has been to offer them nothing likely to waken the emotions, though all the while their mothers and mistresses were repeating with tireless voices, that science for a woman consists in knowing how to adjust that fig-leaf, brought into fashion by mother Eve. As Diderot said, for fifteen years this and nothing else has been ringing in their ears, "My daughter, your fig-leaf is not on right; my daughter, your fig-leaf is very becoming to-day; my daughter, would not your fig-leaf look better this way?"

All you have to do is to keep your wife within this fair and noble sphere of knowledge. If by chance she should desire a library, buy her Florian, Malte-Brun, *Le Cabinet des Fées*, the *Arabian Nights*, *Les Roses* by Redouté, the *Customs of China*, *Les Pigeons* by Mme. Knip, the recent great work on Egypt, etc. Carry out, in fact, the brilliant advice of that princess, who on hearing there had been a riot over the price of bread, said, "Why don't they eat cakes?"

Never mind the slight inconveniences of such an education; it is a trifle to be called sulky sometimes, when you have had enough of your wife's chatter; and if she only appreciates your intellect when you have made a pun, think how pretty she is! If the education of women in France is the most ludicrous of absurdities, if your marital obscurantism has put a doll into your arms, what matter? You are a philosopher, and can have your laugh to yourself. If you lack the courage for a higher enterprise, is it not better to lead your wife safely in the well-beaten paths of marriage, than to risk sending her to climb precipices of love, too steep for you to follow? She may bear you good children, but your aim is not so much to be father of the Gracchi, as to be *pater quem nuptiæ demonstrant*. To help you to realise this aim, we have made of this book an arsenal in which every man, according to his wife's character and his own, may find weapons to combat the dread genius of evil, that may at any moment awake in the soul of a wife. And now we come to think of it, this

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Meditation will be a new light to most husbands, seeing that ignorant men are the bitterest opponents of education for women.

The truth is that a woman who has received the education of a man possesses the qualities, that are most fertile in happiness for her husband as well as for herself; but that woman is as rare as happiness itself, and so you are not likely to have her for your wife. The best thing you can do is to confine the wife you have, in the name of your common happiness, to the sphere of ideas in which she was brought up; for you have to remember, that as a slave raised to a throne at once abuses his power, unaccustomed knowledge will arouse the same insolence in your wife, and you will be lost from that moment. After all, the system prescribed in this Meditation will only require of a superior person, that he translate his thoughts into common currency, in order to be understood by his wife; that is, supposing the said superior person has had the stupidity to marry a doll straight from the factory, instead of choosing a young woman whose mind and heart he has thoroughly tested. Not that we would have every superior man seek a superior woman for his mate, or vice versa! Let no one take it, that we are recommending the conduct of Mme. de Stæl, in her gross attempt to become the wife of Napoleon. What a disaster that would have been! Josephine was a far fitter mate than that nineteenth-century virago.

No, when we talk of those rare and admirable women, so well-fitted by nature and a fortunate education to sustain the impact, which their delicate souls experience in meeting the soul of that great being we call a man, we are thinking of such a one as the devoted Clärchen, in Goethe's *Egmont*. Such women seek no other glory, than nobly to fulfil the part of wife: with supple grace of mind, they bow to the will and pleasure of the masters fate has given them; now soaring with them into the highest realms of thought, now stooping to the simple task of amusing them like children; indulging the whims of these tormented souls, understanding their least words, their casual looks; happy in their silence, happy in their discourses; recognising, in short, that to a Lord Byron the standards of haberdashers cannot be applied, his morals being as remote from theirs as his ideas. But enough! this picture would draw us too far from our subject; we are treating of marriage, not of love.

Meditation XII: Hygienics of Marriage

MEDITATION XII: HYGIENICS OF MARRIAGE.

IT is the purpose of this Meditation to submit to you a new method of defence, by which you may reduce the rebellious will of your wife to such a state of prostration, as it shall never recover from. We shall deal with the reactions on the moral nature produced by physical treatment, especially by a lowering diet, cunningly directed to reduce the supplies of bodily heat. This great theory of conjugal medicine is a philosophy in itself, and is sure to bring a gleam of hope to all those gouty impotents, those wheezing dotards, whom we aroused from their apathy in the article on the predestined; but it concerns more properly the vigorous husband, bold enough to enter on a Machiavellian policy worthy of that great king of France, who set himself to ensure the happiness of the nation at the cost of some of its feudal heads. It is a case of amputating or enfeebling certain parts of the body, for the health of the whole.

Do you seriously believe that a celibate, after a diet of hanea, cucumbers and purslane, with regular applications of leeches to the back of his ears, as recommended by Sterne, would be in a condition to storm the breach of your wife's honour? Suppose a diplomat had been ingenious enough to apply a permanent linseed poultice to the neck of Napoleon, or to administer every morning a clyster of honey, do you believe that the great Napoleon would have conquered Italy? Is it or is it not a fact, that Napoleon during the Russian campaign suffered from an agonising stricture? You know that it is, and that the fate of Europe turned on it! Take another instance: is it not established beyond doubt, that cooling baths and douches produce great changes in the subtle operations of the mind? On a scorching day in July, when your oozing pores are restoring to the air that iced lemonade you drank at one gulp, do you feel the energy of heart and brain that made existence light and joyous a few months before? We think not! Be the stone ever so hard and the mortar ever so good, the iron that was embedded in it will lift the monument and split its base, through the secret and tormenting action of heat and cold, invisible

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forces of the soft air. How much more then must a man be influenced by his atmospheric surroundings!

And that being so, should he not use his mind to become himself an influence on others, should he not create an atmosphere by the vigorous exercise of his will? That is the secret of the actor's power, as well as of the poet's and the prophet's, for it makes no difference whether words or actions be the medium; on this principle, but dimly perceived to-day, a whole science may yet be founded. The human will, that nervous fluid so rapid in transmission, so powerful in its impact on another mind, is itself subject to the changing state of our bodies, fragile organisms as they are and affected by so many circumstances. Beyond this we will not carry our metaphysical observations, but will return to our analysis of the circumstances so affecting the body, as most to weaken or strengthen the will. Do not suppose however, that we shall call on you to put poultices on your wife's honour, to shut her up in a stove, or to seal her like a letter! We shall not even insist on the magnetic treatment, though it would give to your will complete ascendancy over the mind of your wife; bah! no husband would accept the happiness of an eternal love at the price of an eternal tension of the animal forces. No, we shall develop a formidable system of hygienics, by means of which you will be able to put out the fire, when it is only the chimney that has caught.

Already the fine ladies of Paris and its suburbs—and mind you, the exquisites are an important section of the respectable women—have certain practices so appropriate to our purpose, that there is no need for us to search the *Pharmacopœa* for the four cooling herbs, nor to gather water-lilies or any other invention of the sorcerers. We shall even leave to Aelian his hanea, and to Sterne his purslane and cucumbers; for these too plainly announce anti-phlogistic designs.

In the first place you will encourage your wife to lie stretched for whole days on one of those pillowy divans, which half submerge the body in a sea of eider-down. Also, as far as your conscience permits, you will encourage her feminine propensity to breathe nothing but the perfumed air of a closed room, whose voluptuous curtains the daylight hardly penetrates. You may obtain marvellous results in this way alone, provided always you have been a match for

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the riotous ebullitions of her blood; if you were strong enough to endure a brief period at high pressure, you will now find your wife returning to a more normal state, as her body accustoms itself to the conditions. Generally speaking, women like to live fast, but after a period of exceptional storms there come calms, very re-assuring to the anxious husband.

Will not Jean-Jacques prove to your wife, by the enchanting voice of Julie, that it will be an added grace in her not to defile her sweet stomach with the bile produced by a gross diet of beef, nor to dishonour her beautiful mouth by passing hunks of mutton through it? Is there not abundance of pure food in the garden, with its variety of fresh-smelling vegetables and richly-coloured fruit; from abroad have we not fragrant coffee and chocolate, oranges (the golden apples of Atalanta), dates from Arabia and tartlets from Brussels? In these is nourishment at once wholesome and dainty; and while your wife will present a picture of peculiar charm, will acquire an air of mystery in partaking of this angelic food, the results to you will be highly satisfactory. By her diet she may become quite a celebrity in your circle, as another might by her style of dress, by a witticism or by an original action. She ought to develop a passion for Pythagoras, as if he were a poodle or a marmoset.

There are some husbands with pretensions to originality, who combat the feminine belief that it is good for the figure to eat little: to our champion we say, do not be so foolish! Women on a diet do not get fat; that is a plain fact, which there is no escaping from. Be always praising the art with which women famous for their beauty have preserved it, taking frequent baths of milk or of various softening solutions; for while these benefit the skin, they debilitate the nervous system. But impress on your wife, as though out of a great concern for her health, the importance of never washing in cold water; it should always be hot, or at least tepid, whatever other ingredients you may prescribe for her ablutions.

Broussais should be your master. If your wife suffer from the slightest ailment, let it be a pretext to apply leeches freely; do this yourself, and do not fear to apply several dozen in succession: let the treatment of that celebrated doctor be established in your home, as the chief cure for everything.

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As a husband, it is your duty to warn your wife when you see her a little flushed, and you should always be warning her of this; it will mean drawing a little blood from the head, and will give you an excuse for introducing whole shoals of leeches into the house.

As for your wife's drink, it should be a dilution of sweet Burgundy; choose a wine that is almost non-alcoholic, and only put enough into the water to colour it. But never on any account let her take pure water, you would be lost if you did. "Impetuous fluid! the moment you press against the sluices of the brain, how they yield to your cold force! Curiosity swims out on the flood, beckoning to her companions to follow; nor do they hesitate to plunge in after her. Only imagination sits dreaming on the bank; but her eyes follow the stream, till floating rush and straw are transformed into mizzen-masts and bowsprits. Hardly are the ships of imagination under way, when desire appears, a lady with skirt held up high; sees them sailing, and instantly makes them her own. Oh drinkers of water! is it by the power of that enchanted liquor, that you have so often shaped and re-shaped the world at your pleasure, sometimes even changing the aspect of nature, while trampling under foot the incapable sot?"

However, if you should not obtain satisfactory results from our system of diet, combined with our system of inaction, you must throw yourself desperately into another, which we shall now develop. Man has a given sum of energy; we may say that a certain man is to a certain woman as one is to three, or as two is to five, and neither can ever change the ratio. Energy here is only another name for will, it radiates from a person much as sound, sometimes coming in greater volume and sometimes in less: but for each person it always has the same character; if it varies in pitch, it is only by octaves. This energy is a unique force, and whether it is manifested in passionate desires, in intellectual or in bodily efforts, it is always under the direction of the individual it emanates from. A boxer spends his energy in blows, a baker in kneading his bread, a poet in ecstasies that absorb an enormous quantity; while a dancer's passes into his feet: thus each directs it to his fancy, and may I see the Minotaur sitting quietly on my bed this evening, if you do not know as well as I where he spends his!

Meditation XII: Hygienics of Marriage

Men as a rule manage to consume the sum of energy with which nature has endowed them, whether in necessary labour or in agonising passions; but our respectable women remain a prey to the tormenting caprices of this force, which in their circumstances finds no outlet. If the energy of your wife has not been lulled by our system of inaction, try the other extreme, keep her always moving, and more and more violently! You are made anxious by the sum of energy in your wife? well, provide her with occupations that will consume it all. You need not attach her to the crank of a machine; there are plenty of ways to exhaust her, without going outside the ordinary work of women. Above all there is dancing! We recommend this to you as a gulf, in which the flames of passion are most effectually quenched; but as the style of dancing will vary with circumstances, we leave the details of the plan to you. The matter has been so well treated by a contemporary, that we cannot resist quoting.

"The dancer victimised by an admiring circle, fairy enchantress though she is, pays dearly for her success. What must be the fruits of efforts, so disproportionate to the powers of a delicate sex? Muscles worked to excess begin to waste; forces, intended for the passions and the intellect, are absorbed in other directions. The absence of desire, the yearning for rest, the preference for substantial food, these are all indications of an impoverished system, more anxious for its necessities than for its enjoyments. As an old actor once said to me, to live with dancers is to live on mutton; they could not do the work without stimulating food. Believe me then, to be loved by a dancer is a delusion; attracted by a semblance of Spring, you will find a cold and grudging sun, will shudder in the chill of unresponsive senses. Calabrian physicians order a course of dancing, as a cure for the hysterical passions common among the women of their country; and the Arabs use a similar treatment for their blood-mares, when lasciviousness interferes with their fecundity. The best brains in Europe are all convinced, that dancing has a cooling effect on the blood, and stupefies the imagination. As foolish as a dancer!—it is a proverb in the theatre. Many proofs could be added, we shall give only a few. It is notorious that the sedentary life of shepherds gives rise to irregular passions. The morals of weavers were in great disrepute in Greece. Among the Italians the lame

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are proverbially immoral. As to Spaniards, in whose veins are so many influences of African heat, they have a common saying which shows where they have learned to look for passion: *muger y gallina pierna quebrantada*, a woman and a fowl are the better for a broken leg. Where is such a science made of pleasure as in the East? it is all summed up in a decree of the Kalif Hakim, founder of the Druses, which forbade any of his subjects on pain of death to make a pair of shoes for a woman. All over the earth, it seems, the storms of the heart only break when the legs are at rest."

But what perfection of cunning, to make a woman dance, and at the same time to feed her only on white meat! Do not suppose that these remarks, as true as they are entertaining, are a contradiction of our first idea; by the one method or by the other you may produce in your wife a state of debility, in which her desires shall cease and your anxiety with them. The only difference is, that by the dancing you drive the enemy out of the door, and by the inaction you smother him at home.

But we seem to hear some timorous voices—or are they hypocritical?—being raised against our hygienics in the name of morality—what? and of sentiment! "Has a woman no soul?" they cry, "has she not the same feelings as we? What right has a man to treat her as so much material, disregarding her ideas, her needs and her yearnings? You talk as if the husband were a smith, and she a piece of metal, out of which he can hammer a candle-stick or an extinguisher, as he may choose! Is it because the poor creatures are weak and sensitive, that you set on a brute to torment them, to his own profit solely, regardless of all justice? Suppose your ghastly systems of debilitation, with their slackening and softening or else overstraining of the fibres, should bring on painful and dangerous illnesses; suppose you sent some poor woman to her grave, one who was dear to yourself perhaps; suppose, etc., etc."

Here is our answer. Have you ever counted the different shapes that Pierrot gives to his little white hat? he turns it and twists it, making successively a boat of it, a drinking-cup, a half-moon, a spinning-top, a fish, a dagger, a baby, an old man's head, a skull-cap, a washing-basket, and so on! You could not have a better image of the way a wife should be handled; the kind of

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despotism we recommend is simply management, infinitely varied and resourceful. At the same time let us remind you, that a wife is in fact a chattel, acquired by contract; she has given possession to her husband, and that constitutes a title except in cases of real estate. Strictly speaking, the wife is no more than an annexe to her husband; cut and slash let whoso will, she cannot be given a separate individuality. Let not her murmurs or her cries disturb you, nature made her for our use, made her to bear everything, children, sorrows, even blows from man.

Do not call us hard: in all the codes of the so-called civilised nations, the laws regulating the lot of woman may be summed up in the ruthless epigram, *vae victis*, woe to the weak! And now consider this last thought, a weightier perhaps than any we have given you yet: if yours is not the yoke, beneath which this frail and seductive creature is driven, it will be the far crueller yoke of some capricious celibate; weigh this up, and out of humanity you will follow our system of hygienics.

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MEDITATION XIII: PERSONAL MEANS.

THE preceding Meditations have rather developed general systems of conduct, than indicated how a definite attack is to be met; as the doctors would say, there were general prescriptions rather than topics. Well, here are the personal means, that nature has given you for your defence. Providence forgets no one; if she gave to the cuttlefish of the Adriatic the sepia-squirt, by which it blackens the water and so escapes from its enemy, you may be sure she has not left the husband without a weapon. Come! it is time to draw yours!

In marrying, you ought of course to have made it a condition, that your wife shall nurse her babes: thus between the handicap of pregnancy and the cares of nursing, you get a respite of a year or two at least from the danger. When a woman is occupied in bringing into the world and in feeding a cub, she really has not time to think of lovers; apart from the fact that she is not in a condition, either before or after her confinement, to appear in society. For how could the least modest of the ladies, who are the subject of this book, dare to show herself great with child, to parade the internal growth, her accuser to the world. What would Lord Byron have said, who could not bear to see women eating? not till some six months after her confinement, when the child is weaned and she is recovering the freshness of youth, can a woman begin to think of enjoying her liberty again.

If your wife did not nurse her first baby, you will surely have wit enough to make this an argument for her nursing the next; you should even be able to awake in her a desire so to do, while the child is still unborn. Read her passages from *Émile*, inflame her imagination with the picture given by Jean-Jacques of a mother's duties, work her up to a state of moral exaltation! We will say no more: either you are an intelligent man or you are a fool; if the latter, you are bound to be minotaurised, even after reading this book; if you are intelligent, a hint will be enough for you.

This first of your means, we admit, is to some extent directed

Meditation XIII: Personal Means

against yourself; but it is not the only one, and there will be plenty of opportunities for using the others at your disposal. Since Alcibiades cut off the ears and the tail of his dog to oblige Pericles,—who had on his shoulders something like our Spanish war, complete with Ouvrard's army contracts, and so surely had need to distract the attention of the Athenians,—there has not been a minister who has not wanted to cut off the ears of some dog. It is the same in medicine; when inflammation appears at some capital part of the organism, the practice is to start a distraction at some other part, by the application of irritating moxas or blisters, by sacrifice or by acupuncture. Thus one of your means will be to apply a moxa to your wife, or to stick a needle into her mind; anything that diverts her attention will be in your favour.

There was once an extremely intelligent man, who had made his honeymoon last about four years, but now the moon was on the wane; he noticed an ominous flattening on one side of it. His wife was at the exact stage, at which in our first part we represented any honest woman; she had developed a taste for another man, a worthless fellow enough, small and ugly to boot: but never mind what he was like, the point is that he was not her husband. At this juncture our hero thought of a dog's tail; he cut it off, and thereby renewed for several years his precarious lease of happiness. His wife, we should mention, had behaved with such cunning, that he could not forbid the house to her lover without appearing ridiculous; she had discovered that they were distantly related. The danger was becoming daily more imminent; the Minotaur could positively be smelt about the house. One evening the wife saw her husband sitting as though weighed down by a great sorrow, a tragic sight truly. She had already arrived at the stage of showing more affection for him, than she had felt even in the days of the honeymoon; and now she plied him with sympathetic questions. They were met by a gloomy silence. More and more questions; and in the few words extracted from our friend, hints of a terrible misfortune! Aha! he had applied a Japanese moxa, that burned like an *auto da fé* in 1600.

The wife tried a hundred manœuvres, to discover if this sorrow was caused by the lover in the grass; it was her first intrigue, and all her forces were engaged. Her imagination worked at high pressure, before everything she must possess

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her husband's secret: as for the lover, she had no time to think of him now! At last one evening, the husband yields to a desire to confide his troubles to so tender a friend, he announces to her that all their fortune is lost. They must give up their carriage and their box at the opera, must go to no more balls or garden-parties, —but there will be no temptation, for they can no longer live in Paris. Perhaps if they stay quietly down in the country for a year or two, they may be able to recover all. Then cunningly playing on his wife's feelings, he condoles with her on being bound to a man, who loves her indeed, but is penniless; in saying which, he tears out one or two hairs. And so he went on, till his wife fairly rose to the occasion, feeling her honour required it. In the first heat of this conjugal exaltation, he took her away to his country estate. Followed more sacrifices, a whole succession of mustard-plasters on the brain, and endless dogs' tails cut off! A Gothic wing was added to the house, half the park was dug up to make a lake and a river; and Madam of course was consulted about everything. But busy as they both were kept by these improvements, the husband never forgot what was the purpose of them; he was most careful to leave suitable books on the drawing-room table for the evening, and by a hundred other means to see that time never hung heavy. It is true that if he invited any neighbours to the house, he selected only the most elderly or the most stupid; but how charming he himself seemed after them! When he took his wife to Paris for a month in the winter, he plunged her into such a whirlpool of balls, race-meetings and other diversions, that she had not a minute to give to lovers, those fruits of an idle life; and on their return to the country, she was glad of the restful atmosphere. That was a conjugal moxa in good earnest! and in addition, the husband did not forget to make children! But observe this, never at any time did he think it advisable to confess the trick: if his fortune was restored, it was understood to be the natural result of building a Gothic wing, and of spending enormous sums on making rivers; for the lake acted as a dam, you see, and so the rush of water out of it would be very profitable for mills of all sorts.

Other good moxas are tours in Italy or Switzerland or Greece; or illnesses may be discovered, demanding an immediate course of the waters, preferably the waters of most distant spas. But

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there is no need to mention more, an intelligent man can think of plenty for himself: let us continue the examination of Personal Means. Only first we ought to remark, that all our reasoning is based on an assumption which, if false, will make it waste of time for you to read any more, to wit, that your honeymoon lasted a respectable time, and that the young lady you married came to you a virgin: for otherwise, French morals being what they are, your wife will only have married you for the purpose of becoming inconsequent. So much for that. Now supposing that the strife between virtue and inconsequence has arisen in your wife's soul, it will involve perpetual comparisons of you and her lover; involuntarily she will be making them at all moments; and in that very fact you have a means of defence, entirely personal, yet rarely employed by husbands, none but the superior few daring to seize their advantage. What you have to do is to enter into competition with the lover, no less! Your aim will be to lead him if possible to commit some blunder, of course without your wife suspecting who was responsible; your hope will be to hear her murmur scornfully some evening, as she puts on her curl-papers, "I think my husband even is preferable!"

Remember, in setting to work, that you have the great advantage of knowing your wife's character, and especially of knowing what offends her; and so by the exercise of a little diplomatic skill, you ought to be able to trick the lover into ruining his chances, when he thinks to score a great success. At the very start this lover, according to the custom of his kind, will have claimed to renew a past friendship with you, or to found one on the existence of common friends; there's your chance! Either through these friends, or by treacherous hints given him direct, you mislead the bold celibate on certain essential points: if you do it cleverly, you will soon see Madam showing her lover the door, without either of them suspecting how it came about. This is to stage in your own house a five-act comedy, in which you play the brilliant part of Figaro or Almaviva; and for several months you can laugh over it secretly, the laughter being all the heartier because your interest and your self-esteem are in the audience.

I had the honour in my youth to be liked by an old émigré, who put those last touches to my education which young men

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generally owe to a woman; his memory will always be dear to me. Many were the stratagems this friend taught me, some of them diplomatic masterpieces, requiring as much grace as cleverness for their execution. The Comte de Nocé, for that was his name, had returned from Coblenz at a time when it was still dangerous for nobles to be in France; but he was as fearless as he was generous, regarding danger merely as an opportunity for the exercise of his wits. Though aged about sixty, he had just married a girl of twenty-five: I shall always believe it was charity moved him to the rash act, for his wife had been the victim of a capricious and tyrannical mother. "Will you be my widow?" was the old man's way of proposing to Mlle. de Pontivy: I can see the kindly twinkle in his eye as he said it. Alas! through his loving nature he became more attached to his wife than a prudent man should. But as in his youth he had had affairs with some of the most brilliant women at the Court of Louis XV., he felt that his training was pretty complete, and did not despair of keeping the young countess from all encumbrances. Never have I seen a man carry out to such perfection the instructions, which I am here trying to give to husbands. What charm did he not give to life, by his gentle manners and witty conversation! Only after his death did his wife learn through me, that he suffered from gout. To listen to him was to sit beside pleasant waters, on which glinted beams of love from his eyes.

He had wisely retired to a secluded valley, beautifully situated on the border of a forest; and the walks that his wife took thereabout in his company, I often thought, were surely walks in Paradise. His lucky star had willed that Mlle. de Pontivy should have a sound heart, and should possess in a high degree that exquisite delicacy, that modesty in immodesty one might almost call it, which in the plainest woman seems to radiate a glow of beauty. Suddenly into their blissful life came a nephew of the Count, a handsome young officer just returned from the disasters of Moscow: the purpose of his visit was to discover whether or not there was any danger of cousins to cut him out of his inheritance. There could not have been a greater contrast between him and the count; it was as noticeable in his black hair and moustache, and his bright but glassy eyes, as in the conceited chatter of the staff-officer, and his elegant *disinvoltura* with its shallow vivacity.

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I happened to arrive just at the moment when the young countess was teaching her nephew backgammon. By the way, there is a proverb to the effect that women only teach this game to their lovers, and vice versa. The same morning M. de Nocé had caught a glance given by his wife to the Viscount, one of those glances in which innocence, desire and fear are all combined. In the evening he proposed that we three men should go out shooting the next day, and this was readily agreed to. As we made our way through the wood he was at his gayest and friendliest, though as I learned afterwards, he was feeling all the while the first twinges of an attack of gout. The Devil himself could not have started more fun between us, or have kept the ball rolling better. Aha! we had one of the old Grey Musketeers with us, a man who had known Sophie Arnould: there is no need to say more. I became as mad as the rest, I'm afraid, and joined with the Count and his nephew in every sort of joke.

"I had no idea my uncle was such a good blade," said the young officer aside to me, as we halted for lunch. When we were all three seated on the turf, in one of the greenest glades of the forest, the Count led us on to the subject of women, on which he discoursed better than Brantôme or Aloysia.

"You are to be envied under this Government, you children of the Revolution! the women have morals now!"—To understand the old man's exclamation, you should have heard the horrors the Captain had been relating.—"Yes!" resumed the Count, "it is an advantage of the new order, that it gives to the passions more attraction, more mystery. Formerly women were easy, and you would be surprised how much wit and charm were needed to arouse those stale temperaments; we had to work all the time! But a man could have a great success, who got a reputation for some witticism neatly conveying an obscene thought, or perhaps for some outrageous act well carried off. Women love that sort of thing, it will always be the surest way of succeeding with them." These last words were uttered with intense bitterness; he stopped then, and began tickling the dog with the stock of his gun, as if to disguise a deep emotion. "Bah!" he exclaimed after a pause, "my time is past! One needs the imagination of youth, and the physique too! Why did I ever marry? Women brought up by mothers who lived in that period of brilliant gallantry are

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all treacherous, their modesty is affected, they were taught to cultivate that air of candour. . . You would think that the purest of honey would offend their delicate lips, but those who know them can tell you, they would eat sweets made of salt!" He stood up with his gun in his hand, then as if to emphasise his disgust, ordered arms with such violence, that the stock sunk several inches into the damp turf.

"It seems, my dear aunt likes naughty stories," the officer whispered to me.

"Or dramas not too long drawn out," I added.

He straightened his tie, re-adjusted his collar and got up—I should rather say, leaped up! indeed his movements all the way home reminded me of a Calabrian goat! It was two in the afternoon when we reached the house, and there was an hour or so till dinner-time: the Count took me to his study, on the pretext of showing me some medals he had spoken of on the way back. The dinner when it came was gloomy; the Countess was excessively polite to her nephew, she would have satisfied the strictest master of etiquette, but a lover must have been frozen by her manner. On our return to the drawing-room, the Count said to his wife. "Going to have your game of backgammon? I think we'll leave you."

The young Countess did not answer; she was looking into the fire and seemed not to have heard. The husband started towards the door, beckoning me to follow. At the sound of his steps, his wife turned her head quickly: "Why leave us?" she said, "you have all to-morrow to show off your old medals!"

The Count stayed. Without seeming to notice the embarrassment of his nephew, who had now lost all his cavalier airs, the old gentleman entertained us all the evening by his conversation. Always delightful to listen to, I have never known him so brilliant or so kindly. We talked much of women; and the pleasantries of our host bore the hall-mark of exquisite delicacy. Looking at his snowy head that evening, I never saw a white hair in it, his whole being glowed so with the spirit of youth; all wrinkles were smoothed out, and the snows of winter melted. Next morning the nephew departed.

Even after the death of M. de Nocé I could never discover, though his widow would talk familiarly to me as an old friend,

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what impertinence the Viscount had been guilty of. It must have been something serious, for Mme. de Nocé would never see him again, and even to this day cannot hear his name mentioned without a slight movement of the eyebrows. I must confess, I did not guess at the time what was the purpose of the Count's little shooting-party; but I realise now what a deep game he was playing.

However, we must warn you, should you have such a notable success as M. de Nocé, not to think you can repeat the same trick; your wife will require a double measure of guile the second time, if she is to be deceived. It would be better for you to revert to moxas, lest you reach too soon the limit of your talents. You have perhaps found that it is the same with pleasure, the human soul demands a sort of geometric progression: or is it the body? for see how the opium-eater must always double his dose to obtain the same result. Things or ideas, sentiments or actions, they must always be increased; for the more our weakness is indulged, the more imperious become its demands. Hence the need in drama for a climax of interest, like the graduated doses of a drug. In the employment of these means with your wife, the way you will avoid a semblance of repetition is by studying the circumstances of each occasion, and finding inspiration in those; success will depend on your having no fixed plan, but on being able to turn every chance to your advantage.

In conclusion we will mention a means, that strikes right at the root of the evil. You surely have some influential friends, people who can pull strings; or perhaps you occupy a high post yourself? Well, can you not manage to separate your wife from her lover, by obtaining promotion for him, if he is in the Civil Service, or if he is in the army by getting him transferred to another garrison? If they attempt a correspondence, you must intercept the letters, and then—*sublata causa tollitur effectus!* which may be translated, "Remove the cause and you remove the result; no money, no Swiss." The method of intercepting letters we shall explain later. If you object that your wife could easily take another lover, we quite agree; a husband can never rest on his laurels. You must regard this means as a preliminary only, and be ready to follow it up with a moxa; this will give you a breathing-space, in which however you must be still preparing more ruses.

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While applying moxas, you should learn to enliven the treatment by the comic arts of Carlin: this immortal Italian would hold an audience in hilarious suspense for hours, by the infinite variations of voice and expression with which he repeated two phrases, ridiculously simple in themselves, "The King said to the Queen. . ." and "The Queen said to the King." Imitate Carlin!

For the rest, be always putting your wife in check, lest you be mated yourself. For lessons in the art of making promises, go to the minister of a constitutional government. Learn how to produce your jack-in-the-box, when you want a child to run after you without noticing how far it has come: we are all children, and curiosity makes women readiest of all to follow a will-o'-the-wisp. You have an ally in imagination, that flame so quick to leap up, and alas! so quickly quenched.

With your wife you must learn—to be and not to be! a happy art for those who have it! You must seize every chance to gain a point in her estimation, taking care of course not to overwhelm her with your superiority, and with the happiness you confer on her. By such ways as these, unless the ignorance in which you keep her has paralysed her mind altogether, you will come to an understanding of one another, such that you may desire one another for quite a while yet.

Meditation XIV: Arrangement of the House

MEDITATION XIV: ARRANGEMENT OF THE HOUSE.

THE means and systems, which we have discussed hitherto, may be classed as purely moral; they are based on the nobility of the soul, and never touch the repugnant: but now we must turn our attention to precautions more characteristic of Bartholo. Do not flinch! there is a marital courage as well as a martial.

What is the first care of a little girl, after she has bought a parakeet? Is it not to shut it up in a pretty cage, from which it cannot escape without her leave? Take a lesson from this child. In whatever has to do with the arrangement of your house or its rooms, your one care should be not to make things easier for your wife on the fated day, when she shall seek to deliver you to the Minotaur: in more cases than not, such disasters are due to the deplorable facilities, presented by the arrangement of the house. Above all, take care to have as concierge a single man, and one who is entirely devoted to your person. That is a treasure not so difficult to find, for every man knows some old family servant, still living somewhere, who in old days danced him on his knees. Between this Nestor and your wife there should arise, through your good management, a hatred as of Atreus and Thyestes; for the outer door is the Alpha and Omega of an intrigue. Do not all the dramas of love reduce themselves to this, going in and coming out? Another point, your house will have no strategic value, unless it has a courtyard behind and a garden in front, and is detached from others on both sides.

As to the interior, you will begin by closing up every sort of hollow or cavity in your reception-rooms; that cupboard, though it only hold six pots of jam, is to be made solid with brick. You are preparing for war, and the first thought of a general is to cut off his enemy's retreat. Let there be no angles in the room beside the four corners, so that each wall present an unbroken plane, which the eye can run over and instantly recognise any strange object. In enforcing these rules you can appeal to the monuments of the Greeks and Romans, whose beauty consists mainly in simplicity of line, together with a most sparing use of

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ornament: the Greeks would have given a pitying smile at sight of one of our drawing-rooms, with a great cavern of a cupboard in the middle of the wall. But this fundamental system of defence must be most rigidly enforced in your wife's bedroom. Never let her drape her bed in such a way, that a person on the other side of it would be hidden by the curtains. Be relentless on the subject of communications; her room should have no exit but through the reception rooms, so that anyone going out shall be instantly seen. The Marriage of Figaro will have doubtless taught you to choose a room for your wife on that side from which the ground slopes down, and on which the windows will therefore be higher than on the other: remember that all celibates are Cherubins.

We assume that your fortune gives your wife the right to demand a dressing-room, also a bath-room and a room for her maid. . . Ah! beware of Suzanne, and never fall into the error or arranging that this little chamber shall be just below madam's: it should always be above, nor should you have any scruples about disfiguring your mansion by bars across the window. If a malignant fate has willed, that this danger-spot communicate with your wife's room by a concealed stair, have long consultations with your architect; all his genius must be called into play, in order that this sinister communication may be rendered as innocent as that first of stairs, the miller's ladder. Let it have, we adjure you, no treacherous cavities; nor let its broad steps present at corners that voluptuous curve, which Faublas and Justine availed themselves of while the Marquis was out. The architects of to-day make staircases, that positively are preferable to ottomans! Rather restore the virtuous spiral of our ancestors, steep and stony!

As to the chimney of Madam's room, you will not forget to fix in the flue an iron grating, at a height of at least five feet above the level of the mantel-piece: never mind if it has to be fixed afresh every time the chimney is swept. If your wife make fun of this precaution, remind her of the recent murders, in which the criminal came down the chimney; nearly all women are afraid of burglars.

The bed of course, is a critical piece of furniture, on whose construction you should meditate long and earnestly; for in this feature every point is of capital interest. Here are some conclusions,

Meditation XIV: Arrangement of the House

based on the experience of many. This piece should be original in shape, so that it will never belong to a past fashion, however rapidly successive fashions may condemn the creations of our decorators; for it is essential that your wife have no excuse for changing this theatre of conjugal pleasure. Its base should be solid as rock, leaving no treacherous space between mattress and floor. Also remember how Byron's Donna Julia concealed Don Juan under her pillow. . . But this is not a subject to be treated frivolously.

LXII. THE BED IS THE MARRIAGE.

Presently we shall give fuller attention to this admirable creation of human genius, this invention that should rank higher in our estimation than ships, than fire-arms, than Fumade's match, than wheeled carriages, than steam-engines, single or compound, vacuum or expansion, higher even than barrels and bottles. A moment's thought will show that the bed is as wonderful as any of these; but further, if we reflect that it is our second father, and that the most tranquil part of our existence, as well as the most stormy, is spent under its royal canopy, we shall be at a loss for words in which fitly to eulogise it. (See Meditation VII., Theory of the Bed.)

When the war, of which we shall speak more fully in our third part, breaks out between you and your wife, you must always be finding ingenious pretexts for rummaging in the drawers of her desk; for if it were only a statuette that your wife were hiding from you, you ought to know where it is. A gynecium built and furnished on these principles will allow you to see at a glance, if it contains but two pounds of silk more than usual. Let a single wardrobe be introduced, and you are lost! During the honeymoon you must bring your wife to realise that you are one of those fussy people who cannot bear to see anything out of place; and so she will form the habit of keeping her room extremely tidy. For if it were not a rule that the same articles were to appear eternally in the same places, she would gradually make it such a scene of disorder, that you would no longer be able to see if there were two pounds of silk more or less.

The window curtains should always be of transparent

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materials; and you should make a habit of strolling about the room before getting into bed, so that Madam will never be surprised to see you go to the window; it will be just the sort of absent-minded thing you would do! Talking of windows, see that in your house the sills are so narrow, that not so much as a bag of meal could rest on one.

Your wife's bedroom once arranged on these principles, you will be safe, though there were niches in the house to lodge all the saints of Paradise. Every evening, in company with your friend the concierge, you can balance the account of entrances and exits; indeed you might teach him, for greater accuracy, to keep a visitors' book by double entry.

If there is a garden, as we said there ought to be, develop a passion for dogs. When you have one of these incorruptible guardians always under your window, the Minotaur will think twice before entering the grounds; and it will be well to train your four-footed friend to take no food except from the hand of the concierge, in case some celibate should be so lacking in delicacy as to think of poisoning him. But remember that in all these precautions you must seem to act quite naturally, so that no suspicion of your fears may be aroused. If any man has been so imprudent as to marry, without having a house in which these learned principles can be applied, he had better sell it and get another, or else propose such improvements as will enable him to have the house reconstructed throughout.

Ruthlessly banish all sofas, ottomans, cosy-corners, window-seats, etc. Vulgar things, every grocer furnishes his house with them now! You find them everywhere, even in the homes of hair-dressers. And you can say to yourself that you are well rid of them, for they are essentially instruments of perdition; I have never been able to see one without shuddering, I seem to see on it the devil, complete with horns and cloven hoof. Even an arm-chair is dangerous. . . . If only we could shut up a woman within four bare walls! What husband has not wondered, while sitting in a shaky chair whether it has received the education which the younger Crébillon describes as being given to a sofa? Never mind! we have fortunately arranged your house on a system so prudential, that no fatality can there occur, unless by reason of your own wanton negligence.

Meditation XIV: Arrangement of the House

One oddity that you will exhibit—and take care you never correct it!—will be a habit of looking inside all boxes and baskets: a nice mess you'll make, turning everything out! but you will go about it in such a quaint distracted way of your own, that the amusement you give your wife will always win her forgiveness. Of course you will exhibit profound astonishment at the sight of a new piece of furniture, introduced into any of these perfectly arranged rooms; instantly you will want to have its use and purpose explained to you. Then you will go away and rack your brains to discover if it has not some hidden meaning: perhaps it contains some treacherous hiding place, for letters if not for a person!

But this is not all. You have too much taste not to feel, that your pretty parakeet will not want to stay in her cage unless it is a bright one; so all the furniture and decoration must be in the most elegant style, the general effect being at once simple and refined. All hangings and covers should be frequently renewed; the charm of freshness is too essential to allow of any economy on this head. Think of the new stuffs as the bunch of chick-weed that children put into the cage every morning, to make the little bird imagine itself amid the greenness of the meadows. To keep a room bright like this is the *ultima ratio* of a husband; a woman cannot feel neglected when so much is spent on her surroundings.

Woe to the husbands condemned to live in flats! theirs is the most dreadful of all situations: what an influence for good or evil the porter alone can exercise! And will not their dwelling be flanked by others to right and left, not to mention those above and below? It is true that the wife's room will be only on one side, but still the poor man in this situation will have to learn the ages, the professions, the fortunes, the characters, the habits, of all the tenants in the next house, will have to be acquainted also with their friends and relations, and having acquired this mass of information, will have to analyse it, draw his inferences and form a plan of action! At least he need not live on the ground floor, that would be voluntarily adding to the dangers of a flat. There is one consolation however, that when the husband has followed as far as possible the directions, given for the owner of a house, he will be better able than the other to survey the field of battle, inasmuch as his rooms will be smaller and fewer.

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MEDITATION XV: THE CUSTOM-HOUSE.

NO, Madam, no! we assure you. . .
You see, Sir, it would be such an awkward business to have to. . .

Surely you don't think, Madam, we propose to search, as they do at the barriers, every person who crosses your threshold, or who seems to us a little furtive in their manner at leaving, in order to discover if they are smuggling out any jewellery? Goodness, that would be intolerable! No, Madam, there will be nothing objectionable in our methods, nothing suggestive of the customs.

Well, Sir, let me warn you, that this conjugal door-keeping is of all your expedients the one that will require the most tact and skill, as well as knowledge acquired *a priori*, that is to say, before marriage. To be competent to put it into practise, a husband will need to have made a profound study of Lavater's work, to have absorbed all his teaching; his eye must be trained to seize, and his mind to interpret, with extraordinary promptitude, the lightest indications in movement or facial expression, by which a man betrays his thoughts.

We should like to remind the reader, that Lavater was the founder of the science of physiognomy, which ranks with the highest achievements of the human intellect. If his book was at first received somewhat doubtfully, if it even gave rise to some pleasantries, the author found a successor in the celebrated Dr. Gall, whose beautiful theory of the skull completed the theory of the Swiss, giving solidity to the subtler speculations of that luminous mind. The select few, generally diplomats or women, who have had the intellect to embrace the doctrines of these two great men, have often had occasion to remark other signs, by which the thoughts of men are easily to be known. Little personal habits, hand-writing, tone of voice, all these have at some time or other indicated, that a woman is in love or that a diplomat is playing a double game, and so have served the minister of state or husband, requiring to know treachery in love or politics at a glance. Before

Meditation XV: The Custom-House

men equipped with this science the designing person is like a poor glow-worm, who all unwitting lets out light through all its pores; efforts at secrecy have only the effect of flashes, the very darkness of deception providing a ground, on which every movement of the brain is traced in letters of fire. What further knowledge can you need than this? The method of the conjugal custom-house will be to make a rapid, but terribly penetrating scrutiny of the moral and physical condition of all persons entering or leaving your house, when they are visitors to your wife. A husband should be like a spider, which at the centre of his invisible net feels instantly if it is touched, then listens and decides if it is an enemy or some doomed insect that has shaken it. Only you have this advantage over the spider, that you can study in two distinct situations the celibate who visits your house, firstly on his arrival and secondly on his departure: see that you make arrangements accordingly. At the moment of entry, how much may he not tell without ever opening his lips! It may be in raising and settling, by a light movement of his hand, that forelock that is his pride: mark the fingers so nicely spread to make a comb, and the studied unconcern with which he passes them through his hair, then gives a little loving pat to it;

It may be in humming an air: no matter whether it is French or Italian, no matter whether his voice is tenor or baritone, there will be something in the manner of his humming;

It may be in putting his fingers to that expressionist tie, to make sure that the design has not been spoilt by the least shifting to right or left;

It may be in smoothing the frill of his shirt, a precaution more likely to be needed in coming out than in going in;

It may be in furtively testing, by an interrogative touch, if his wig is in the right place, that beautiful fair or dark, curly or straight-haired wig;

It may be in glancing at his nails to make sure they are elegantly cut and polished;

It may be in stroking his moustache or eyelids; watch the hand for a tremor, never mind whether it is white or ruddy, well or ill-gloved: perhaps it is raised to pass a little tortoiseshell scraper between the teeth, watch it the same;

It may be in the nervous and aimless way he caresses his

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tie with his chin, as if his life depended on getting the centre of one over the centre of the other;

It may be in the way he shuffles from one foot to the other, and seems at a loss to know what to do with his hands;

It may be in the fascinated way he keeps looking at his boots, as if to say, "Well, that's what I call a shapely foot!"

It may be in the fact of his arrival in a carriage, or equally in the fact of his arrival on foot: in the latter case notice whether he wipes the specks of mud off his boots;

It may be in his standing motionless, as well as in any fidgetting: many is the man will give himself away, while standing impassive as a smoking Dutchman;

It may be in the way he fixes his eyes on your door, like a soul just emerged from Purgatory, waiting for St. Peter with the keys;

It may be in his hesitating grasp of the bell-handle, or in his casual, or in his precipitate, or in his familiar, very-much-at-home grasp of it;

It may be in the timid pull he gives, making a little tinkle that is almost lost in the depths of the house, like the call to matins on a winter's morning in a convent of Minims; or else in his loud and repeated rings, and his impatient look at not hearing instantly the steps of a footman;

It may be in the cachundy pastille he slips into his mouth, to scent his breath;

It may be in the funny stiff way he takes a pinch of snuff, then brushes away any grains that might smear his linen;

It may be in the sharp way he looks about him on entering, as if he were a dealer valuing the hall lamp, the carpet or the banisters: some of them come in like a house-agent, who is going to show you over;

Finally you may learn something from the youthful or the elderly appearance of the celibate, his symptoms of heat and chill, his brisk and joyous or his doubtfully lagging step, and so on. Enough has been said, we hope, to convince you, that on the door-step and in the hall, there are endless observations to be made.

What we have given is but a rough outline, it is for you to fill in the details of the picture, with its infinite variety of tints: but remember, the colours will be always changing, indeed your life

Meditation XV: The Custom-House

can best be envisaged as a moral kaleidoscope. Observe that there are possibilities we have not touched on at all, we have not considered the arrival of a woman at this scene of revelations, your door-step: our discourse is protracted enough already, it would be endless if we went into all that this might mean; our remarks would be numberless as the sands of the sea, and perhaps as shifting!

To resume, a man waiting before your closed door believes himself entirely alone, and involuntarily he begins an examination of himself, a sort of silent catechism, in the course of which every attitude and gesture of his is expressive, revealing as they come up in his mind his most secret hopes and intentions, his unsuspected faults and his unsuspected virtues; in fact a man on a door-step is like a girl of fifteen at confession, on the eve of her first communion. What proof have we? Peep at a celibate outside, then open the door and observe the change in his face and manner, as he steps into the house. The scene-shifter at the opera, the temperature of the air, the clouds that cross the sun, can work no changes so rapid and complete. Arrived in the middle of your hall, he who innocently gave away so many secrets outside shows not a sign, on which the acutest observer could base an inference; the conventional grimace of society has hung over his soul an impenetrable veil. Too late! our instructed husband has already read the purpose of his visit, plain as in a book, while the visitor communicated with the solitudes of the door-step.

But now there will be an opportunity to verify your conclusions: watch the celibate closely when he greets your wife, listen to his tone of voice, remember his exact words; and again when he leaves her be all attention, for nothing is too small to convey a meaning, nothing is insignificant. What may not lurk in a smile, in a silence, in a sigh? All must be studied; but need we remind you, without the least appearance of taking note? Do you detect a certain self-consciousness in your visitor's manner, does his courtesy to yourself strike you as slightly excessive? now is the time to prove your social talent; no matter how ominous you find these signs, your conversation must be only the gayer, your manner more distinguished by a careless ease. But it would be impossible to enumerate every instance, we must trust to the sagacity of the reader to develop the idea for himself; the science may be said to begin with the analysis of a look, and to rise to

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the exact interpretation of an impatient movement of the toe, concealed beneath the satin of a shoe or the leather of a boot.

But there still remains the exit! For cases must be foreseen in which your door-step scrutiny has been inconclusive, or in which you were not on duty at the time of the celibate's arrival: then his departure becomes of capital interest. The same principles must be applied to this study, but the phenomena will present themselves in inverse order. However, there is a feature of the exit that is peculiar: it is the last act of a play, the moment in which all mysteries are cleared up. When the enemy arrives in the street, he has passed over the last of your trenches, and is out of the area of observation: on arrival he had only hopes and intentions to reveal, now he has achievements; and why should he restrain the gesture of triumph, or of disappointment? The signs will be fewer, but simpler, and oh so clear! Behold your visitor framed in the doorway of his carriage; there you may see the picture of your fate, there read it plainer than any writing! Need we elaborate? You will have seen the backward glance at the house, or even at a certain window; you will have remarked the slow or jaunty step; and how you will have loathed the upstart rubbing his hands, or the coxcomb skipping down the steps!—but you have more to fear from the involuntary pause, of that man under the stress of deep emotion. Ah! were not all your questions as neatly answered in that departure, as if it had been a prize essay for which a provincial academy had offered a hundred crowns? The exit, for clear and precise solutions! Again, we cannot go into further details; to enumerate all the ways in which humanity gives itself away is beyond the power of humanity: anyhow, it is a matter of feeling rather than of learning.

But say! if strangers have to be subjected to these formalities, what of your wife? verily she will come under a perfect fury of observation! Yes indeed; and to start with, a man should make a profound study of his wife's face. This is comparatively easy, because she is often quite unguarded with you, and at all sorts of moments. For her husband that beautiful countenance should have no mysteries; he knows how every sensation is reflected in it, and also the mask that each one chooses to hide behind, when a too inquisitive regard is turned upon it. The changes in his wife's face are a language he has learnt, he reads without

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effort the lightest movement of the lips, an almost imperceptible contraction of the nostrils, the gradual dulling or brightening of her eye, the indefinable gloom that sometimes envelops a face, and again the light that dawns in it; when she speaks, he listens less to what she says than to the varying tones, the sudden tremors, which are the words and phrases of her individual language. This woman is there for all to see and hear, but no other can perceive her mind: for you alone is the pupil of the eye of a deeper hue, or a hair's breadth larger; for you was the lid lowered, or the brow raised. Did a wrinkle show on her forehead, to vanish instantly as the cleft of a ship in the sea; were the lips in-drawn, and did she wilt as a flower, recovering her spirits at a certain moment? For you it was a language; the woman spoke.

In the more difficult tests, when your wife dissimulates, if you can read even the smile of this sphinx, what child's-play you will find the study of her under the conditions of the door-step! When she comes home, or when she is going out, and believes herself alone and unobserved, your wife will be as easy to catch as a crow; she will even speak her secret aloud to herself. Watch the sudden change in expression the moment she sees you: rapid as it is, no art of hers can blot out all traces of that previous look, which still may be read in her face like the water-mark in a sheet of paper, giving you the very texture of her soul. You have only to see her against the light as she enters! You will have plenty of opportunities, any day you like you can take an observation of Madam's mind, and forecast her actions with certainty.

Then there are her exits! Is there a man so indifferent to the phenomena of love, as not to have watched with delight, many a time, the tripping step and bird-like movements of a woman hurrying to an appointment? Progress more sinuous than a flight, she glides through the crowd like a snake through long grass! The shops in vain display for her their lures; no gowns, no gay materials, can draw her from her path; on and on she goes, like a faithful animal following the scent of its master. Blind to admiring looks, deaf to the passing compliment, she does not even feel the magnetism of the bodies brushing against her, that subtle sensation known to everyone who has walked a crowded street in Paris. Time alone has value for her, minutes now are more than diamonds. But oh the indiscretion of it! her walk,

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her dress, her face, they all proclaim her destination. Charming sight to the sauntering celibate, but how sinister for a husband! and worse still if he see her on her return, with absent look, confessing that her soul yet lingers, that it ever dwells in that lodging only known to herself. What is the difference now in her hair? it is not in disorder, but you can see it was not put up before her own glass; the broken comb of the celibate could not give the accustomed gloss, no maid stood behind to raise the charming edifice, coiling the wavy tresses with an artist's hand. Oh! it is a slight difference enough, but in it her happiness is signed for the close observer. And what a pretty recklessness is in her walk! There is no word for that state of mind, which glows now in the richer tints of her skin: it is not assurance, there is no hardihood in her eye; if she is gay, there is mixed with it a sweet melancholy; proud she may be, but there is a shyness in her soul as of a child.

Well, these indications belong properly to our Meditation on *final symptoms*, which deals with the stage at which a wife is perpetually dissimulating; but they will give you an idea of the rich harvest of information you may gather when your wife returns home, even before the actual crime is committed. Then it is only her thoughts that are guilty, and how innocently she will reveal them to you! For our part, we never stand on a door-step without feeling, that its proper ornaments would be a wind-guage and a weather-cock! By the way, we have given no technical details for the construction of an observatory, for these will vary in almost every case; anyhow we feel it may be safely left to the ingenuity of the jealous, to carry out the precepts of this Meditation

Meditation XVI: The Wife's Charter

MEDITATION XVI: THE WIFE'S CHARTER.

I CONFESS I only know a single house in Paris, built and arranged on the principles of the last two Meditations: perhaps I should add, that I founded the system on the house! This admirable fortress belongs to a young Master of Requests, intoxicated with love and jealousy. When he learned that there existed a man solely occupied with ideas for the perfecting of marriage in France, he had the goodness to open to me the doors of his house, and to show me over the gynceum. I could not sufficiently admire the profound genius, with which the precautions of a jealousy almost Oriental had been disguised; all that one noticed was the elegance of the furniture, the beauty of the carpets and the brightness of the wall decorations. I agreed with him, that it was impossible for his wife to make any of her rooms an accomplice in treachery: still I had a question to put to him. "Excuse me, Sir," said I to this Othello of the Privy Council, who struck me as not being very strong on the high politics of marriage, "I have no doubt that it is a pleasure to the Countess to dwell in this Paradise, but it would need to be an enormous pleasure, especially as her husband is here so much: may not a day come, when she will have had enough of it? For it is only human nature to tire of everything, even of the sublime. What will you do when these attractions lose their charm for the Countess, and before your latest device she only opens her mouth to yawn, or perhaps to present to you a petition, mentioning two rights indispensable to her happiness? You know what they will be: firstly the liberty of the subject, meaning the right to come and go at her own sweet will; secondly the liberty of the press, meaning the right to send and receive letters, without their having to pass your censorship."

I had hardly finished speaking, when the Count gripped my arm, and exclaimed: "Oh women! don't I know their ingratitude? If there is anything more ungrateful than a king, it is a people; but I tell you, Sir, woman is more ungrateful than either. A married woman makes the same use of us as his subjects

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make of a constitutional monarch: he may give them a happy existence in a beautiful country; his government may take infinite trouble, what with debates in two chambers and a whole series of ministries, to save this people from dying of hunger, to mend their roads as well as they deserve, to light the towns with gas at the citizens' expense, and to give them in their houses the climate of the 45th degree of latitude, while forbidding any but its own officials to demand money from them: all these benefits his government may even force on them, with a most efficient police force supported by an army, and in the end, I ask you, what thanks does the king get from the dwellers in this Utopia? They will not be ashamed to demand further the right of walking at will on the roads, and even of knowing what is done with the money given to the tax-collectors. Good heavens! if the king attended to the bawling of some demagogues in the tricolor press, he would have to cut up his throne and give a piece to every ne'er-do-weel in the country: but much of the agitation is only a sort of punch-and-judy show, run by self-styled patriots, a pack of jail-birds making what they can out of the mob, and as ready to do a dirty job for a duke or to be a go-between for a respectable woman!"

"My dear Count," I replied, "I am entirely of your opinion on this latter point: but how will you meet the just demands of your wife?"

"What I shall do, sir, is. . . Well! I shall make the same answer, and do as much, as those governments which are not quite so stupid as members of the opposition would persuade their constituents. I shall begin by solemnly granting a constitution, under which my wife will be declared entirely free; her right to go where she may choose will be fully recognised, also to exchange letters with whom she will, the contents of which she will be under no obligation to disclose to me. My wife will have all the rights of the English parliament; she will be free to say whatever she likes, to dispute, to propose strong measures; yes, and she will believe she has power to put the said measures into execution, but as to that—we shall see!"

"By St. Joseph," I said to myself, "here is a man who understands the science of marriage as well as I!" But I made a provocative answer, in order to draw from him an amplification

Meditation XVI: The Wife's Charter

of the policy: "You will see, Sir, one fine morning, that you have been fooled as well as others."

"Allow me to finish, Sir," he replied gravely, "My constitution would be what statesmen call a political theory: they know well that such theories when put into practise, under their able direction, end in smoke. Ministers of state know even better than a Norman lawyer, how to give the form without the substance: though I must admit, M. de Metternich and our M. de Pilat, great men as they are, seem to have forgotten that there is such an art. For some time they have been greatly concerned by the drift of affairs, they ask if Europe is in her right senses or dreaming; does she know at all where she is going, they cry, is she using her reason. . ? Ha! as if peoples could reason any more than women! M. de Metternich and M. de Pilat are alarmed to see this age possessed by a mania for constitutions: they forget how the last was possessed by a mania for philosophy, and the age before that by a mania for reforming the abuses of religion! Truly each generation is a sort of conspiracy, in which the members seem to act independently of one another, but unconsciously are always receiving and passing on the orders of the day. Dear me! these two worthy gentlemen need not be alarmed: let them use their power intelligently, knowing what to give and what to withhold, and there will be no fear of the masses rising out of the depths of their six kingdoms, no dreadful day of reckoning. I have no patience with such politicians! To think that two men of their ability should not have seen the moral of this constitutional comedy, should not appreciate the high politics of giving the age its bone to gnaw! With their principles I entirely agree, it is their lack of subtlety in applying them I quarrel with. Of course the monarchy must fight for its privileges: a power is a metaphysical being, with a life to lose like a man, and the same right to defend it. Now self-preservation in this case consists, quite simply, in *surrendering nothing*; and to succeed in this it is necessary to grow, to advance, for when a power becomes stationary it is no longer a power, it is dragged at the heels of another. Of course if a power is already absolute, it cannot do more than remain so, and that it must strive to do. I know just as well as these gentlemen, in what a false situation a monarchy is that has made concessions: it has allowed another power to

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rise in its sphere, which like itself must grow in order to live. One of them must sooner or later annihilate the other, for every entity tends to the fullest development of its own nature, and the nature of a power is to be sole and absolute. And so a power will only make concessions voluntarily, when it sees therein a chance of gaining greater privileges. The strife between the two powers of people and monarchy is what has produced to-day our dual form of state, with its government by checks: the patriarch of Austrian diplomacy finds the drama a little too exciting, and declines to take a part; but if he only knew, it is the audience who are in the greatest danger, while England and France are playing what is really a very lucrative comedy. These two countries have said to the people, "Look, you are free!" and the people is content; it enters into the government like a line of noughts, which only increase the value of unity! If any commotion threatens, the people is entertained to such a dinner as Sancho Panza got, when he called for food in that island on dry land that he was sovereign of. Well, we husbands too have an example in that admirable scene!

"Thus my wife has the right to go out when she likes, but she must tell me where she is going, how she is going, on what business she is going, and when she means to return: not that I exact these conditions with the brutality of our police; on the contrary, the formalities are made so attractive as to seem an additional privilege; and perhaps a government some day will have the sense to reform police methods likewise. In my words, in the expression of my eyes, curiosity and indifference play in and out; I am at the same time all gravity and gaiety, all severity and love. These are the prettiest of conjugal scenes, and a delight to play in, demanding as they do a blend of cunning and of grace.

"The day on which I took the wreath of orange-blossom off my wife's head, I knew that the ceremony we had gone through was a sort of harlequinade, as is a king's coronation, preliminary to a five-act play, more serious perhaps but still a comedy. Have I not my police, like any king? have I not my body-guard, and my attorney-general? Ha!" The Count slapped his chest, laughing; but in his eye was a glint of real resolution. "Is it likely," he went on, "that I should allow my wife to go out walking unless accompanied by a footman in livery? It *looks*

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so much better! not to mention the pleasure it gives Madam of saying everywhere, "Where's my man?" But my invariable practice has been to find occasions to go the same way myself, and so for two years I have proved to her, that it is a pleasure always new to me to give her my arm. If the streets are muddy, I give her a lesson in driving a frisky horse: but you may be sure, my teaching is of such a kind that she does not learn much. Suppose she forget the rules, or slip out intentionally without a pass-port, that is to say on foot and unaccompanied, have I not a groom on the watch, a *heiduch*, an *alguacil*? I can rest easy at home, for I know she is shadowed by a *holy Hermandad*. You know, my friend, there are many ways of driving a coach-and-four through an act of parliament, or in other words, of nullifying a wife's charter of liberty, while adhering strictly to the letter. I have noticed for instance, that the manners of high society involve an amount of dawdling, which devours half the life of a woman, without her noticing the time pass: by adroitly encouraging such ways, I confidently hope to bring my wife to the age of forty, without her so much as thinking of adultery; I will repeat the joke of the late lamented Musson, who wagered that he would bring a shop-keeper from the Rue Saint-Denis to Pierrefitte, without his suspecting that he had left the shadow of the clock-tower of Saint-Leu.

"What!" I interrupted, "you don't mean to say you have thought of those admirable deceptions, that I was proposing to describe in a Meditation entitled, 'The Art of Putting Death in Life?' Oh dear! I thought to be the first inventor of that science. The neat title was suggested to me by a recitation, which I heard a young doctor give of an unpublished work of Crabbe, a most admirable composition. In it the English poet introduces a fantastic being, called Life-in-Death, who pursues across the oceans and continents of the world a living skeleton called Death-in-Life. The reciter gave the piece in a French translation of his own, and a very polished piece of work it was; but I remember, very few of his guests grasped the hidden meaning, or even suspected that the fable is as true as it is fantastic. Sitting as I did in brute silence, perhaps I was alone in the vision I had of whole generations, driven by the forces of Life, yet passing without ever living! Women's faces rose before me in hundreds and thousands, faces

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of the dead all heavy with sorrow; and as I looked, all were pouring down tears, over the hours lost in their ignorant youth. In the distance I saw the birth of a railing Meditation, and heard peals of Satanic laughter; and now you are going to slay the infant! But let us see; confide to me the means you have invented, to help a woman let slip the fleeting hours, when she is in the flower of her beauty and at the flood-tide of her desires: perhaps there will be some strategems left, some ruses still for me to describe!"

The Count began to laugh over his forestalling of an author, and said to me with an air of satisfaction: "My wife, like every young woman in this blessed age, has for three or four years been hammering the keys of a defenceless piano; she has given her own—very much her own—interpretations of Beethoven, has strummed the airs of Rossini and brilliantly executed the exercises of Cramer. Of course I have been careful to insist on her musical gift, always applauding enthusiastically; I have even sat through interminable sonatas without the semblance of a yawn, and further to encourage her studies, have ventured to give her a box at the opera. Thus I feel safe for three evenings out of the seven, which God thoughtlessly created in the week. I am always on the look-out for musical houses: in Paris, you know, there exist drawing-rooms like those German toys, sort of perpetual hurdy-gurdies, to which I go regularly to endure the musical indigestions, that my wife calls concerts. In addition to this, a large part of her time is occupied in practising."

"What's this?" I cried, "don't you know, Sir, the danger of letting a woman take to singing, especially if you leave her exposed to all the excitements of a sedentary life? You might as well feed her on mutton, straight away, and give her water to drink!"

"My wife," replied the Count with dignity, "eats nothing stronger than boiled chicken, and I always take care to follow a concert with a ball. Let me also remark, that for six months of the year I manage, unknown to her of course, to keep her out of bed till one or two in the morning: have you ever thought, what must be the good results of that morning sleep? they are incalculable! Firstly, each of those obligatory pleasures of marriage is a free gift from her; for I never asked her to come to bed, I was so happy with her society in the drawing-room! Thus

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she comes to think of me as always waiting on her pleasure, never enforcing my own. Also I give her the feeling without a word said, that she has been constantly amused since six in the evening, our dinner-hour, until eleven the next morning, the hour at which we get up."

"Can she ever duly appreciate the talent, Sir, that gives her a life so well-filled?"

"Well, you see I have only three dangerous hours left," said the Count, ignoring my compliment; "but has she not sonatas to study, airs to play over? Then I can propose walks in the Bois de Boulogne, can take her to try a new carriage or to pay a visit. Nor is that all: nothing becomes a woman like a most fastidious cleanliness, the time she devotes to her toilet can never be excessive, can never be ridiculous; so I express admiration for all the paraphernalia of this department, show a profound respect for all its mysteries, and thus encouraging her, find a means to consume for her some of the most golden hours of her young life."

"But you can do even better!" I cried, "Listen! for you are worthy to hear such things. You can eat another four hours of her day, if you will learn an art that is unknown even to the most elegant of our modern fine ladies. Enumerate to the Countess the amazing ceremonies, included in the toilet of a Roman lady, when the Empire had created a luxury more than Oriental; only name to her some of the slaves of the bath employed by the Empress Poppaea: the *unctores*, the *fricatores*, the *alipilii*, the *dropacistae*, the *picatrices*, the *tractatrices*, the swan-wipers, and goodness knows what others! Excite her with an account of the slaves described by Mirabeau in his *Erotika Biblion*. Let her only try to reproduce such customs, and you will enjoy hours of peace, not to mention the personal gratification you will have, from the importation into your house of the devices of those illustrious Roman ladies, whose every hair was sprayed with perfume before being artfully settled into its particular place, in whose veins there seemed to flow myrrh and flowers and the scent of the sea, whose linen ravished all the senses, possessing the soul like a voluptuous music."

"Yes, but wait!" cried the husband, all the time warming to his subject, "have I not admirable pretexts in her health? Considerations for the health of my beloved, precious beyond reason to me, allow me to keep her in the house, if so much as

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a shower threatens; and by this means alone I gain a quarter of the year. I have established the fond custom of neither of us going out without coming to give the other a kiss, and saying, 'My angel, I am going out.' Best of all, I have found a way to provide for the future: my wife is going to be tied to the house, she is going to be like a soldier in his sentry-box! My friend, I have inspired in her an enthusiasm for the sacred duties of motherhood!"

"By opposing her inclinations to them?" I asked eagerly.

"You have guessed!" he said with a laugh. "I maintain cynically, that it is impossible for a woman of position to fulfil her obligations to society, to manage her house, to devote herself to all the whims of fashion (and to those of a husband she loves), while occupied in bringing up children. She replies that she is like Cato, who could not trust the nurse to change the napkins of the great Pompey; she will not leave to others a single one of the attentions, required by the tender bodies and impressionable minds of those little beings, whose education truly begins in the cradle. You see, sir, my conjugal diplomacy would not be worth much if in thus condemning my wife to solitary confinement, I did not practise the innocent fraud of begging her, on all occasions, to do just whatever she likes, and of seeking her advice on every sort of matter. The cleverest person is apt to be caught by such an illusion of liberty, and so I spare no pains to convince the Countess, that she is the freest wife in all Paris; but I could not succeed in this, unless I avoided such gross political blunders as our ministers are frequently guilty of."

"I understand," said I, "when you want to trick your wife out of the rights granted to her by the charter, you put on your sweetest and most reasonable airs; in other words, you hide the dagger in a bunch of roses, and as you plunge it carefully into her heart inquire in a loving voice, 'My angel, did it hurt you?' And, as likely as not, she answers, as some people do when one treads on their toes, 'On the contrary!'"

He could not help smiling, as he answered, "If my wife knew she were being kept in the house, she would be surprised at the idea of it giving her pleasure."

"I don't know! perhaps you are the one who will get the greater surprise of the two," I said maliciously. The jealous husband knit his brows; but his serenity returned when I added,

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"I have to thank the happy chance, Sir, which brought me the benefit of your acquaintance; after this visit I can go on to develop certain ideas, common to both of us, as I never could have otherwise. May I ask your permission to reproduce the conversation? What to us are high political conceptions, may be taken by others for irony, more or less entertaining: but I shall pass for a clever man either way." While I tried to thank the Count, the first husband after my heart I had met, he conducted me again through the house; and indeed all the rooms seemed above criticism. I was just about to say good-bye to him, when he threw open the door of a little boudoir, and smiled at me as if to say, "Would it be possible to disturb anything in there, without its catching my eye?" I replied to this slight interrogation by one of those mute bows, which one gives to a host on tasting a marvellous dish. "My whole system," he whispered, "was suggested by three words, which my father heard pronounced by Napoleon in a full session of the Privy Council, when the subject of divorce was being discussed: 'Adultery,' he cried, 'is a matter of sofas!' See now, how I have made spies of those accomplices!" The Count showed me a divan, in tea-coloured cashmere, on which the cushions just then had a crushed appearance. . . "Look!" he said smiling, "those marks show me, that my wife has had a headache, and has lain here." We took a few steps towards the divan, and on this fatal piece of furniture we saw the word *fool*, capriciously traced by four of

"Those fibres fine, that once a maid in love
Stole from the orchard of the Cyprian queen;
And lo! her head by enchantment of that grove
Became a glory of raven tresses rare!
This beauty unearthly seeing, a duke of old
Did found to do it honour an order of knights,
Whose noble lives throughout the world won fame:
All gods they seemed, this brotherhood so inspired."

"No one in my house has black hair!" said the husband, turning pale.

I left hurriedly; for I felt a desire, an irresistible need, to burst into hilarious guffaws. "It is a judgment!" I said to myself, "all he has done with his barriers and fences is to prepare for his wife the intensest of pleasures!" But thinking it over, I grew

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sad; for the experience had brought tumbling down the whole structure, at least of three of my most important Meditations; the Catholic infallibility of my book was attacked in its very essence. I would gladly have paid as much to procure the fidelity of the Countess, as many would have paid for a single slip on her part. But wait! I was destined to keep my money. Three days later I met the Master of Requests in the lounge of a theatre: the moment he saw me he hurried towards me, though I had tried to avoid him, out of a sort of shame. Taking my arm, he gasped out, "Ah! I have spent three cruel days! But I think I can say now, my wife is as innocent as a newly-baptized babe!"

I was a little nettled by his happiness, and answered with mock geniality, "I remember you told me that the Countess liked a joke!"

But he only laughed and said, "Be as ironical as you like, it doesn't trouble me! for this morning I had unquestionable proof of my wife's fidelity. Listen! I happened to get up early, to finish a piece of work; and before settling down I looked out into the garden. There I saw my neighbour's valet making his way out over the wall; I know him well, he is in the employ of a general I often visit. At the same time I saw my wife's maid, standing in the veranda and patting the dog, to protect the retreat of her gallant. All is accounted for, the rascal has black hair; but well as I know this, I snatched up my spy-glass and turned it on him: yes, black as jet! Never head of Christian gave me such pleasure! But I hardly need tell you, in the course of the day the silly trellis on top of the wall was torn down, and something more formidable put up. Remember, my dear Sir, if ever you marry, not to trust too much to a dog, but to put broken bottles on your walls."

"And the Countess," I asked, "did she notice your anxiety these last three days?"

"Do you take me for a child?" he cried, opening his eyes wide. "Never in my life have I been in higher spirits!"

"You are a great man unknown to the world," I declared with enthusiasm. "And you are not—what I am overjoyed to find you are not!" But he did not wait for me to finish, for he had seen one of his friends intending, or appearing to intend to salute the Countess.

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What is there to add, that would not be merely a redundant paraphrase of the doctrines embodied in that conversation? Eat the fruit, and sow the seed! But you see, oh husbands! your happiness hangs by a *hair*.

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MEDITATION XVII: THEORY OF THE BED.

IT was about seven in the evening. Seated on their academic chairs, they formed a semi-circle around a vats fire-place, in which a few coals were burning sadly, yet serving as a symbol of the vital subject under discussion. From the impassioned gravity in their faces, it was evident that the members of this assembly were there to pronounce on questions touching closely the lives and happiness of their kind. They had no mandate but from conscience, were met together like some secret religious society of old; yet they represented interests even mightier than those of kings and peoples, they spoke in the name of the Passions, worked for the happiness of countless generations un-born.

A grandson of the celebrated Boulle was seated at a round table, on which was a list of the questions for debate, drafted with rare skill; at the same table sat I, a beggarly secretary, employed to write the minutes of the meeting. Perhaps I should mention that the scene of this story is laid in England, and that all present were married men.

"Gentlemen," said an elderly man, "the first question for your consideration arises out of a passage in a letter, written to Caroline of Anspach when Princess of Wales, the writer being the widowed mother of the Regent in the minority of King Louis XV; it reads as follows, "The Queen of Spain has a sure way of getting her husband to say what she wants him to say: the King is very devout, he would believe he was damned if he touched any woman but his own; at the same time this good prince is of a very amorous disposition. Thus the Queen is able to obtain from him whatever she desires. She has had her husband's bed made to run on little rails: if he refuses her anything, she gives his bed a push away from hers. If he grants her request, the beds come together and he is admitted into hers; the King is then supremely happy, for he cannot do without. . ." I shall read no further, Gentlemen, lest the pure-minded frankness of the German Princess be taken by any here for immorality. The question we have to decide is clear: will a wise husband adopt the bed on rails?"

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The unanimity of the voting left no doubt as to the answer. I was ordered to enter in the minute-book the decision, that if a husband and wife sleep in separate beds in the same room, the beds ought not to run on rails. A proviso to be added was also carried, and entered in these terms: "But without the present decision in any way prejudicing, what may hereafter be declared the best system of sleeping for a married couple." The President then handed me an elegantly bound volume, containing the original edition, dated 1788, of the Letters of Mme. Charlotte-Elisabeth de Bavière, widow of the only brother of King Louis XIV; and while I transcribed the passage quoted, he proceeded as follows: "Gentlemen, I believe you all received the notice, announcing the second question for debate. . ."

"I ask to be heard!" cried the youngest of this company of jealous ones, springing up excitedly. The President nodded assent and sat down. "Gentlemen," said the young husband, "are we prepared to discuss so grave a problem, as that presented by the negligence, the almost universal negligence, of the designers and constructors of the marriage bed? This is no mere problem of carpentry, the results extend into all space and all time; the highest intelligence of humanity is demanded for its solution. Gentlemen, the mysteries of conception are enveloped in darkness still, the science of our day has been able to shed but a feeble ray into that obscurity; we know nothing at all of the extent to which environment acts on those microscopic organisms, discovered by the patient researches of such benefactors of humanity as Hill, Baker, Joblot, Eichorn, Gleichen, Spallanzani, the great Müller, and last but not least, M. de Bory de Saint-Vincent. The perfecting of the bed depends on a high theory of music; I have even gone so far as to write to Italy, the native land of melody, to obtain exact details of the construction of beds prevailing there: we shall know any day now, whether screws or pegs are used in the fastening, whether the curtains are hung on loose rods, whether the beds are on wheels of any kind, in short whether their construction is more or less objectionable than in other countries. But what will be most interesting to learn will be, whether the creaking, due to drying of the timber in that sunny climate, produces *ab ovo* that sense of harmony, which is in-born in Italians. Pending the reply to my letter, I move the adjournment of this meeting."

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"Hi! we're not here to talk about music!" cried a true John Bull, jumping up indignantly. "It's morals we have to discuss, and nothing else! Gentlemen, the moral question predominates over all others, and we ought . . ."

"At the same time," said one of the most influential members, "the opinion of the first speaker seems to me deserving of consideration. In the last century, Gentlemen, one of our writers, who may be described as at once the most philosophically gay and the most gaily philosophic, I mean of course Sterne, deplored the carelessness with which men set about the making of men: "Oh shame!" he cried, "that the artist who makes but a copy of the divine physiognomy of man should be crowned and applauded, while he who makes the original, the prototype of that piece of mimicry, must find, even as virtue must, his reward in his work!" Gentlemen, should we not devote ourselves to the improvement of the human race, before attending to the breeding of horses? I once passed through a little town in the district of Orleans, in which the whole population consisted of hunchbacks, with sad embittered faces, real children of misfortune: well! the remarks of the last speaker have recalled to me the fact, that all the beds in that village were in a shocking state, also the rooms offered nothing to the eyes of a bride but hideous sights. How, I ask you, can our souls preserve their heavenly character, if instead of the music of the angels, that filled the blessed realm they have just left, they are greeted in the moment of their descent by a din of creaking, screeching timber, of all the torturing sounds of earth the most infernal? Who knows but we owe the fine minds, that from time to time are born to the glory of humanity, to solidly constructed beds, and nothing else? Who knows but the turbulent mob, which brought about the French Revolution, was conceived on a lot of shaky, tumble-down beds? Observe that Orientals, whose various races are almost without exception beautiful, have peculiar sleeping arrangements of their own. . . I beg to second the adjournment."

The gentleman sat down, and a member of the Methodist community arose. "Why change the subject of debate?" he began. "The improvement of the race, the breeding of men of genius, is no concern of ours; let us keep in view the ideals of a healthy morality, and the interests of a justly jealous husband."

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As to the noise you complain of, are you ignorant that to a wife on the brink of sin it is a deterrent more awful than the Last Trump itself, also that the success of many husbands in the divorce court may be traced to suspicions aroused by that same creaking? Look up the cases of Lord Abergavenny, of Lord Bolingbroke, of the late Queen, of Mrs. Harris; indeed you might look up all the cases in the twenty volumes of . . ." (The Secretary did not catch the name of the English editor.)

The meeting was declared adjourned. The youngest member proposed a collection, to provide a prize for the best dissertation addressed to the Society on the question regarded by Sterne as so important: but when the President's hat had gone round, it was found to contain only eighteen shillings.

So closed this meeting of the Society, recently formed in London for the improvement of the morals of marriage, and pursued by Lord Byron with such ironical comments. The speeches we have taken verbatim from the printed report of the proceedings of the Society, transmitted to us by the kindness of W. Hawkins, Esq., a cousin of the famous Captain Clutterbuck: this extract may serve to solve some of the difficulties to be met with in the theory of the bed, relative to its construction. But the author of this book feels that the English society, in recognising the importance of this question, was inclined to prejudice it: neither party saw, that there are equally good reasons for being either a *Rossinist* or a *solidist*, in the matter of bed-construction. For our part, if we were called upon to settle the matter, we should declare that it is at once above us and beneath us. We hold with Laurence Sterne, that it is a disgrace to European civilisation, to have so few physiological contributions to the science of callipedia; at the same time we decline to give the results of our own meditations on the subject, because their meaning might be lost or at least rendered doubtful, if we tried to state them in the language insisted on by prudes. It may be charged to us, that this disdainful attitude leaves for ever a gap at this stage of our book: alas, too true! But we have the sweet consolation of bequeathing a fourth work to the next generation: how we enrich it with the deeds we leave undone! It is a kind of negative magnificence, that we commend to all who find themselves more fruitful in projects than in performances.

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Attention now! the theory of the bed will involve far more important questions than those dealt with by our neighbours across the Channel; the question of wheels and rails, or of denunciatory creakings, will soon seem very insignificant! All possible sleeping arrangements for married couples may be classed under three main heads, and we shall recognise no other distinctions;—we are speaking of course of civilised nations, and in them only of the privileged classes to whom this book is addressed;—these three arrangements are:

- 1 ONE BED FOR BOTH;
- 2 TWO BEDS IN ONE ROOM;
- 3 BEDS IN SEPARATE ROOMS.

Before entering on an analysis of these three modes of co-habitation, and of their diverse influences on the happiness of wives and husbands, we must take a glance at the primary function of the bed, and the part it plays in the economy of human Life. It may be laid down, as an indisputable principle, that beds were invented *to sleep in*. With this for a basis, we now proceed to examine the first of our three modes of co-habitation.

ONE BED FOR BOTH.

The custom of husband and wife sleeping together, as could easily be proved, only arose very late, having regard to the antiquity of marriage. By what syllogisms was man led to adopt a practice so fatal at once to happiness, to health and to self-respect? To trace this madness to its source would be a curious research indeed! If you knew that a rival had found a means of exposing you to your beloved in a most supremely ridiculous condition, with your mouth all awry and your face more like a comic mask than anything else, with those eloquent lips of yours dribbling like the spout of a fountain in time of drought, you would take a knife to him, eh? Well, such a rival you have in Sleep! Is there a man in the world who knows what he does, or what he looks like, when he is asleep? Living corpses, we lie a prey to a power which, not content with robbing us of consciousness, makes cruel havoc of our dignity: some few indeed may be said to sleep intelligently, but to most it is a plunge into the lowest abyss of Nature, where they either lie with their mouths gaping like imbeciles, or snore

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till the rafters tremble. Many are like those imps carved by Michael Angelo, putting out their tongues at the passers-by.

I only know one person in the world who is noble in sleep, and that is Guérin's Agamemnon: the artist has shown him at the very moment when Clytaemnestra, prompted by her lover Aegisthus, advances toward his bed to assassinate him. I have always studied to compose my features on my pillow as did the King of Kings, trusting that I shall be found thus sleeping, in the terrible event of other eyes than those of Providence falling on me. And another precaution that I have taken, ever since the day I heard my old nurse with peas in her nose (to use a vulgar but time-honoured expression), is to add to the private litany, that I say to Saint Honoré my patron, a prayer that he will preserve me from this degrading eloquence.

When a man sits up in bed in the morning, with a stupefied look on his face and a red cotton handkerchief round his head, he is a figure of fun if ever there was one: it would be hard to recognise under these conditions the glorious husband, sung by Rousseau. Yet this is a man: see the glimmer of consciousness on that swollen turnip of a face! Oh artists! if you want ideas for caricatures, travel on a night mail and at every village, when the guard wakes the post-master, study that official head! You may have an odd face yourself, but you can afford to laugh at these; for at least you have your eyes wholly open, your mouth under control, and some sort of expression in your face. Ah! but do you know how you looked an hour before you woke up, or even in the first hour of your sleep when, neither man nor animal, you fell under the empire of dreams, the mocking dreams that come by the gates of ivory? No! that is a secret between God and your wife!

Was it for a continual reminder of the character of man in sleep, that the Romans liked to ornament a bedstead with asses' heads? We must leave the elucidation of this point to the Society for the Study of Inscriptions. Certainly the first man who took it into his head, by the inspiration of the devil, not to leave his wife during sleep, must have known to perfection how to sleep becomingly. So you won't forget to include among the arts, which you must master before entering on married life, that of sleeping with elegance? You remember Aphorism L. of the

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Conjugal Catechism, "A husband should never be the first to go to sleep or the last to wake up?" It might have been followed by a variant, giving another reason than the duties of the male, there implied: "A husband's sleep should be as light as a dog's, lest he ever be a spectacle for waking eyes." Another would be, "A man should accustom himself from childhood to sleep without a night-cap."

Some poets will pretend to see in the sentiment of modesty, or in the much talked of mystery of love, a reason for the common bed: but it is well-known, that if primitive man sought the darkness of hollow trees, if he took his pleasures on the mossy floors of deep ravines, or beneath the flinty roofs of caves, it was not because he was ashamed of those pleasures, but because they would render him defenceless if surprised by an enemy. It is no more natural to put two heads on one pillow, than to put a band of linen round the neck by day; and it is far less reasonable. But civilisation has come, and has crowded a million persons into four square miles; they are penned in streets, in houses, in flats, in rooms, in closets eight feet square: in a while, no doubt, they will be fitted into one another like the tubes of a telescope! Here was a reason for the sharing of beds; economy, fear, misguided jealousy, all inclined the married to this custom.

Once established, it created periodicity in getting up and going to bed, a certain simultaneity being necessary; and that perhaps was a yet stranger perversion of nature! For what impulse is more capricious, more essentially variable, than the feeling at night that it is time to go to bed, or in the morning that it is time to get up? The virtue of either act consists in a timely obedience to a desire, the pleasure of either in watching for the birth of that desire in the flesh: how right and proper then are its grossest breaches of rule! These two acts are the near kindred of love, and yet behold them subjected to a monastic rule, forced into a geometrical frame like a country on a map! Were I a father, I should hate the child who had an explosion of affection twice daily, coming as regular as a clock to bid me a dutiful Good-morning and a dutiful Good-night. It is just so that we stifle whatever is generous and spontaneous in human affections. Judge then of the act of love at fixed hours! It belongs to the author of all things to furnish a splendour ever new, such as glorify

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the regular rising and setting of the sun: none here below can imitate the sun, if we may say so without prejudice to the hyperbole of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau.

To sum up these preliminary observations: firstly, it is not natural for two to sleep beneath the canopy of one bed; secondly, a man asleep is nearly always a ridiculous sight; thirdly, regular sleeping together involves great dangers for husbands. Later we shall try to discover, how our customs may be adapted to the laws of nature, also how nature may be enrolled as an auxiliary to our customs, so as to provide a husband with weapons of defence in his mahogany cave. In the meantime we have another curiosity to examine.

TWIN BEDS; OR TWO IN ONE ROOM.

If the handsomest and wittiest of husbands wants to be minotaurised at the end of a year of marriage, all he has to do is to put two beds under the embracing arch of a single alcove. The fact being stated thus concisely, let us inquire into the reasons. The first husband to conceive the idea of twin beds was doubtless a man-midwife, who knowing the turbulence of his limbs in sleep, wished to preserve the child within his wife's body from possible kicks. Or was he just some predestinate suffering from a catarrh, and doubtful as to the tunes his nose might play in the night, —doubtful too perhaps as to the tunes he himself might fail to play? Wait! it might have been some young man so exuberant in his embraces, that he was always finding himself either on the edge of the bed in danger of falling out, or depriving his wife of sleep by having fallen asleep across her body! But now we come to think of it, why should not the inventor have been some Maintenon, prompted by her confessor; or else an ambitious woman, seeking a means to govern her husband? No! of course it was some sweet little Pompadour, with that Parisian failing so pleasantly expressed by M. de Maurepas—alas! the stanza was the cause of his long disgrace, and perhaps of much of the trouble in the reign of Louis XVI:—

“ Iris, what love your charms inspire,
All fresh as summer showers!

Where you have trodden flowers are born,
But, Iris,—only flowers! ”

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Yes, that might account for twin beds: but now it occurs to us, might not the inventor have been a semi-philosopher, who had gone so far in his reflexions as to realise, what must be the effect produced on his wife by the spectacle of himself asleep? In the other bed he could pull the sheet over his head, and so avoid exposing a dropping jaw and a lop-sided night-cap.

Well, well! Whoever you are, unknown author of this Jesuitical device, all hail, brother! In the Devil's name, all hail! You have been the cause of many calamities; your work has the character of all half measures, it has the disadvantages of both extremes without the advantages of either: there is nothing at all to be said for twin beds!

How the civilised man of the nineteenth century, how that sovereign intelligence, that has exhibited a power almost supernatural; how a creature that has had the genius so to disguise the mechanism of his existence, that the needs of his body have become rather a glory than a humiliation; how this man who goes to the ends of the earth for a perfume, who cannot drink a cup of water without leaves from China or beans from Arabia being hurried to the table, that diffused in the liquid he may drink the soul of the East, may possess the treasures confided to a herb by the sun; who cuts the hardest and rarest crystals, who moulds and hammers silver and gold, who bakes and glazes clay, and who employs the arts he has perfected, employs them one and all, to decorate and dignify his—feeding-trough! how this royal savage, this child of nature rising above his parentage, who hides his *second* necessity under snowy folds of cotton and linen, themselves appearing only in frills of lace beneath a robe of silk, coloured as the rainbow and encrusted with diamonds and rubies, in movement like a splendid ship, with sails all spread and a dash of sparkling spray across her bow: *how* the creator of this ship can then run it on such a reef, can wreck it in all its splendour on two wooden beds! this passes our comprehension. What use in making the whole universe an accomplice in our illusions, our poetic lies? What use in religion, in codes of law and morals, if the invention of an upholsterer—likely enough it was an upholsterer who invented twin beds—deprives love, that second great need of our lives, of all its illusions, cuts out the reverential preliminaries and strips the god of his ceremonial wrappings,

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leaving but the bare and ugly facts of nature?—for that in brief is the effect of twin beds.

LXIII. A DESIRE MUST BE SUBLIME IN ITS MANIFESTATION, OR IT WILL BE GROTESQUE.

Love that awakens immediate response is sublime: but love that has to cross a ridiculous interval. . . Go and sleep in twin beds, and see if your love-making is not always grotesque! The contradiction involved in this semi-separation gives rise to two situations, which we shall now examine in turn: they will reveal to us the causes of many disasters.

Towards midnight, a young wife is combing out her hair and yawning. I know not whether her gloom is due to a headache, still less whether it is the right or the left side of her head that is affected; perhaps she is just overcome by the monotony of life, is in one of those moods when everything seems black. To see the lackadaisical way she is undressing, the effort that it is to pull off a stocking and the little interest she takes in the lifting of her leg, you would get the impression, that she would go and drown herself if she could not sink into sleep, and beneath its waters take her being to the magic forge to be tempered anew, so that on the morrow the bright colours of life may be reflected in her. At present no fire is melting her; she might be at the North Pole, or at least in Greenland or Spitzbergen. Cold and listless she gets into bed, thinking probably in the same strain as Mrs. Shandy, that to-morrow will be an unlucky day, that her husband is very late out, that the meringues she had for supper were not sweet enough, that she owes five hundred francs to her dress-maker, and so on: you may give her what thoughts you like, provided they are suitable to a woman in the dumps.

Enter now a great jovial fellow of a husband; he has been at a business meeting which ended up with punch, and he is slightly emancipated. He begins to undress, walking about all the while and throwing his clothes on different chairs; his socks are left on the sofa and his boots on the hearth-rug. Then he proceeds to wrap up his head in a red cotton night-cap, not taking the trouble to tuck in the corners. From time to time he has thrown a cheery phrase at his wife, little abrupt genialities, such as make up conversation at this dark and conjugal hour,

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when our machinery still runs, but with reason sleeping at the controls. "Hullo! in bed?"—"Hell! it's cold to-night!"—"You're silent, sweetheart!"—"You look snug in there!"—"Cunning little thing, pretending to be asleep!" Discouraged a little, he begins to yawn instead of talking; and soon our hero plunges into his own bed, the springs giving a growl of protest as he does so: we have not given all the little preliminary events, which vary with every couple. But it is only now that the comedy of the twin beds really begins. When the husband shuts his eyes, it is as if he had passed from the daylight into a theatre, across whose stage pass all the pretty faces, all the shapely legs, every alluring figure, that he has seen during the day: he is tortured by sudden desires! He raises his head and peeps at his wife. . . It seems a face more charming than any, framed as it is in the frills of a pretty nightcap: though she sleeps, the fire of her look seems to burn the lace falling over her eyes, nor can sheets and blankets hide the ravishing curves of the body they cover! "My kitten!"—"My dear, I'm asleep!" How to make a landing in this Lapland? I give you youth and beauty, wit and charm: now tell me how you will cross the straits, that separate Greenland from Italy. The gulf between Heaven and Hell is not more impassable, than the line between the blankets of your bed and the blankets of hers, let the two be even touching; for your wife's blood is cold and sluggish to-night, while the fires of desire run through yours. Were it only the mechanical act of lifting a leg from one bed to another, this movement exhibits a husband, especially if crowned with a red cotton night-cap, in the most undignified of all positions. Between lovers—ah what a difference!—awkward situations are clothed in romance, if they are not justified by the necessity for speed and even glorified by danger. Love has a mantle of purple and gold, which it throws over the smoking ruins even of a captured city: but if Hymen is not to see ruins in the richest carpets and the most seductive silks, it must borrow the wand of love. You might be only a second crossing into your wife's bed, but the spectre of *duty*, that presiding deity of marriage, would have time to rise before her eyes in all its naked ugliness.

Is there anything so maddening as the coldness of a woman one desires? Indeed a man must resemble a maniac to her cold

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judicial eye, when desire is making him alternately tender and angry, insolent and appealing, biting as an epigram and soft as a madrigal. He is then giving a fair imitation of the scene in *Venice Saved*, in which the great Orway as Senator Antonio repeats pathetically his mistress' name, on his knees at her feet: "Aquilina, Quilina, Lina, Aqui, Nacki!" Antonio, when he tries to play a doggy part, only gets the whip; and so it is with our imaginary husband. To every woman, including his lawful wife, a man only appears the more ridiculous, the more passionate he shows himself in these circumstances: when he commands he is hated, and after this when he is minotaurised, as he surely will be, has he not deserved it by such an abuse of his power? If you refer to the *Conjugal Catechism*, you will see that he has violated some of the most sacred principles.

But whether a woman yield or not, twin beds introduce into marriage an abruptness and a publicity, such that neither the chastest wife nor the most delicate husband can preserve an atmosphere of decency. The scene we have just described, and which is capable of course of infinite variations, has for pendant the inverse situation; but in this there is less of the comic and something almost of the tragic. I was discussing these weighty matters one evening with the late Comte de Nocé, of whom I have had occasion to speak already; he had with him also a great friend of his own age, tall and white-haired, who is still living and therefore shall be nameless. The old gentleman scrutinised us with a sarcastic air, and we expected he was going to give us some scandalous anecdote; we stopped talking, and looked at him much as the reporter from the *Monitor* looks at a minister passionately rising in the House, whose spontaneous outburst has been already communicated to him. The speaker in this case was a refugee and a marquis, who had lost wife, children and fortune in the Revolution. The Marchioness having been one of the most inconsequent women in her time, our companion was not lacking in observations on the nature of women. Being now at an age when all things are seen from the bottom of the ditch, he spoke of himself as you would speak of Mark Antony or some person equally remote. This is the story he told.

My young friend (he did me the honour to address himself to me, because it was I who had closed the previous discussion),

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your remarks recall an evening, on which a friend of mine behaved in a way that might have lost him his wife's respect for ever: and in those days it was extraordinarily easy for a woman to take her revenge; the cup was in her hand, as you might say, and she had only to put it to her lips. I must tell you, this couple slept in separate beds, which however stood side by side in the same alcove. On the evening in question they came in late from a ball, a brilliant affair given by the Comte de Mercy, the Imperial ambassador: the husband had lost a pretty large sum at cards, and was wrapped up in his thoughts; he had to pay six thousand crowns the next day, and he a lieutenant of musketeers! You remember, Nocé, ten of them could hardly scrape up a hundred crowns between them; so my friend had something to think about!

The young wife, as always happens on these occasions, was in the highest of spirits. "Give His Lordship all he wants for the night," she said to the valet, "and you can go." At that time there was nearly as much dressing to be done at night as in the morning, but it was highly unusual for a lady to signify to a servant, that she was in a hurry for her husband to come to bed: nevertheless the words of the Marchioness did not arouse her husband to a sense of his situation; he remained preoccupied with to-morrow's debt, while a much more critical situation developed in the immediate present. Madam was preparing for the night before a glass, and with the assistance of a maid was giving to her appearance a hundred coquettish little touches: presently she turned round and said to her husband, "Do I look nice?"—"You always please me," said he absently, continuing to prowl up and down.—"You're very gloomy!" she said, planting herself in front of him in the most seductive dressing-gown; "Won't you speak to me, my bear?" But I could not tell you all the sorceries of the Marchioness; you should have known her!—*You* saw her once or twice, I think, Nocé? (he said in a bantering tone)—Well, for all her charm and for all her beauty, her designs were frustrated by the six thousand crowns, which nothing could drive out of the head of that imbecile husband; the Marchioness got into bed alone. But women are never at the end of their resources; the moment she saw the Marquis about to get into bed, she hugged herself and cried, "Ooh, I'm cold!"—"So am I!" he answered, "why don't

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the servants warm the beds?" It was then that I rang for the valet.

"*You rang?*" cried the Comte de Nocé, bursting out laughing. "Then you were the Marquis in the story?" But the old Marquis would say no more!

Not to divine the desires of a woman, to be in Siberia when she is in the tropics, or to be snoring when she is awake: these are only some of the minor disasters incidental to twin beds. A woman has a chance of learning, for example, that her husband is a sound sleeper; and once assured of this, what will she not venture to do? I had the following Italian story from Stendhal, who told it to me as an example of feminine boldness, his dry sarcastic tone adding much to the effect.

Ludovico has his palace at one end of Milan, at the other end is the palace of the Countess Perneti. One night Ludovico felt that he must brave everything, to look on those adored features, if only for a second; and at peril of his life, he effected an entrance into the palace of his beloved, no one knows how. He approached the door of the nuptial chamber: Elisa Perneti, kept awake perhaps by a corresponding desire for her lover, heard the stealthy footsteps—and divined who was there. Through the wall her imagination saw a face aglow with love: she slipped out of her bed, while the husband slept peacefully in its twin; as light as a shadow she crossed the room to the door, gave Ludovico one devouring look, then grasping his hand and laying her finger on her lips, led him down the passage.

"He'll kill you!" her lover whispered.

"Possibly."

But even that danger is not the worst objection to twin beds. We will suppose that most husbands are light sleepers, we will suppose that they never snore and that they are always able to divine the exact degree of latitude in which their wives happen to be; wipe out if you like all the objections to twin beds we have given: there will still remain one, which in itself is sufficient to condemn the system in the eyes of a prudent husband.

In the critical situation defined in our first part, we have

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considered the marriage-bed as one of the husband's means of defence: it is only in the common bed that he has a regular and infallible test of the growth or decrease of his wife's affections; *there* is the conjugal barometer. And so to sleep in a twin bed is deliberately to remain in ignorance. You will learn in the third part, when we come to treat of the *civil war*, the incalculable uses of a common bed, and how many secrets a woman involuntarily betrays in it. Never, we adjure you, be imposed on by the friendly arm-in-arm appearance of twin beds! There never was in the whole world a stupider or a more treacherous invention: shame on the mind that conceived it! Let that soul be anathema!

However, we must not omit to mention, that this method of co-habiting is as salutary and proper for those who have passed the twentieth year of marriage, as it is pernicious for young couples still within the danger zone; twin beds are just the thing for the duets, to which the catarrhs of middle age give rise. The groans wrung from one spouse by an attack of rheumatism or by a persistent gout, perhaps by a cough due to an irritation of the throat by snuff, may often be to the other a blessing in disguise, yielding a night animated by memories of their early loves; provided of course the groaning and the cough are not too unbearable.

It would be out of place here to name the exceptional circumstances, that sometimes justify a husband in introducing twin beds: they are misfortunes that cannot be avoided. We are dealing with normal situations, and cannot more fitly conclude this section than by quoting a remarkable saying of Bonaparte's: "In the mingling of sweat there is an exchange of soul," such were his very words, "and once that has happened, nothing should separate the couple, not even illness." But this is a matter too delicate for analysis.

Some busy critic may object, that there exist old families, in which twin beds are a rigid tradition; the capacity for finding happiness in them being handed down from father to son. By way of answer, the author would like to point out, that there are plenty of worthy men who find happiness all their lives in looking on at games of billiards. We think enough has been said on this method of co-habitation, for all fair-minded persons to form

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a right judgment on it; and so we pass on to the third formula for the nuptial couch.

BEDS IN SEPARATE ROOMS.

There are not to be found a hundred husbands in France, or in any single nation in Europe, so far advanced in the science of marriage, or of life if you like, as to choose to sleep in rooms separate from their wives' rooms. To know how to put this system into practice: that represents the highest degree of manly intellect, the most supreme mastery of circumstances! When a husband and wife sleep in separate rooms, you may know that they are either virtually divorced, or that they have learnt the secret of happiness; they either abominate or they adore one another.

We cannot undertake here to expound the application of this idea; but its purpose must be as apparent as it is beautiful, namely to make of constancy in marriage a spontaneous delight, instead of a duty imposed. This reserve in the author should not be taken for inability, he is restrained solely by reverence for the subject. It is sufficient for him, that the faithful will understand when he declares, that by this system alone can husband and wife realise their souls' young dream. As for the profane, they will have heard enough when he tells them, in answer to their prying questions, that the aim of this form of marriage is to give happiness to one sole woman. Which of them would deprive society of all the talents on which he prides himself, and that to what end? the benefit of one woman! Yet a man can produce in the valley of Jehosaphat no fairer title to glory, than that in life he brought happiness to his mate: Genesis tells us that Eve was not happy even in the Earthly Paradise; else she would never have desired to taste the forbidden fruit, that eternal emblem of adultery.

The transcendental system of separate rooms, to which this section was nominally devoted, can only be a subject for allusion even between initiates; for as soon as anyone has grasped the significance of the idea, he is struck dumb by it as we are. If you want a treatise on the subject, you have one in the facts of marriage; for all point mutely to the two separate rooms as the light. Lycurgus had the same vision, that legislator to whom the Greeks

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owed their understanding of marriage: we should like to raise a statue to him, inscribing on the pedestal the words that head this section. May his whole system be embraced by future generations! If modern morals have made us too soft and self-indulgent for it, let us at least try to cultivate something of its spirit.

There is a conclusive reason for not developing this inspired theory here, it would be outside the scope of this work. Given the situation, which we begin by supposing marriage to have arrived at, a man who slept apart from his wife would be only inviting disaster, and no pity could be given him when it came. This concludes what we have to say on the third method of co-habitation. However, if few men are great enough to sleep regularly in separate rooms from their wives', all can tackle the problems incidental to a common bed; so we shall now attempt to solve for them some of these. That we much prefer the common bed to twin beds, the reader will have gathered by this time; but there are difficulties which it would be vain to deny.

One bright night in December the great Frederick, after looking up at a sky in which the twinkling of the stars bespoke a sharp frost, exclaimed to his companion, "Aha! a night like this means many soldiers for Prussia!" In this sentence the King stated the most serious objection to the common bed: it may be all very well for a Frederick or a Napoleon to value a woman according to the number of children she produces, a husband of talent ought to consider the manufacture of a child only as one of his means of defence, as explained in Meditation XIII; and it is for him to judge when the time has come for the employment of this means. But this observation leads to a realm of mystery, into which the physiological Muse refuses to be inveigled: she was willing enough to enter the nuptial chamber when it was unoccupied, but modest virgin as she is, she would blush at the spectacle of amorous sport.

Now that the Muse has thought fit to cover her eyes with lily hands, that like a knowing school-girl she may see no more than she wants to see through the spaces, so nicely proportioned between her almost touching fingers, the author will take advantage of the access of modesty to introduce at this stage of his book a reprimand to our national morals. In England the nuptial

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chamber is a holy place; no visitor is ever received in it, and more than one great lady is said to make her own bed, rather than admit servants into the room. Why is it, that of all insular fancies we choose to disdain the very one, whose grace and delicacy should have most appealed to the tender soul of the Continent? Most of our women seem to feel nothing immodest in the custom, by which visitors in France are invited into the sanctuary of marriage: there can be no doubt as to our own opinion, after our condemnation of pregnant women appearing in public. Mark this: if they want the celibate to respect marriage, married people must pay some respect to the passions of the celibate. Well, so much for that.

We must confess, that to sleep every night with one's wife appears at first an act of fatuous insolence. . . . If a number of self-indulgent husbands, only too ready to testify in support of the common bed, ask how an author with pretensions to an understanding of marriage can recommend for husbands a course of abstinence, when such a course would be the ruin of a lover, very well! then the doctor of conjugal sciences must leave confessing, and positively insist, that the method he is now engaged in defending, namely the regular sharing of a bed, is from many points of view a fatuous insolence on the part of the husband. What we propose to show is, how the evils may be minimised. It is a case of making a virtue of necessity; for short of sleeping away from home, this method is the only one left for a husband, now that we have eliminated number two and number three, separate rooms as being too angelic for him and twin beds as being too dangerous. Bear in mind always, that we are considering marriage in a definite crisis: then perhaps we shall be able to convince you, that the common bed offers more advantages and less disadvantages to the husband, than do either of the two other forms of co-habitation.

Husbands will have learned from our observations on twin beds, that the temperature of a man's blood is in duty bound to correspond, as far as possible, with the climatic conditions prevailing at any moment in his wife's organism: but it seems to us, that this equality of sensations will arise quite naturally, under the harmonising influence of a snow-white sheet spread over both. There now is a great point in favour of the common

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bed! Really, nothing should be easier than to know at any hour of the night, when one pillow receives both your heads, precisely at what degree of amorous expansion your wife has arrived.

Look at the appliances you have to assist you! Man (meaning the species and not only the male half of it) goes through life with an indicator attached to him, which records plainly and accurately the measure of sensuality in the body at any moment; this mysterious gynecometer is to be found in the palm of his hand. Yes, of all our organs the hand is the one that most surely communicates our sensual state: chiology is a fifth work I bequeath to my successors, for I must content myself here to touch on that science only so far as is pertinent to my subject. The hand is essentially the instrument of touch; and touch is the sense which makes the least imperfect substitute for any of the others, none of which can do any of its work in return. As it is the hand that has executed every conception of man hitherto, the hand might be said to be *action* itself. All the currents of our being await here the contact that shall give them outlet; and it has been remarked, that men of powerful intellect always have beautiful hands, the perfection of this feature being indeed the sign of a high destiny. Jesus Christ did many of his miracles by the laying on of hands. This member exudes vitality, and whatever it has pressed is charged with a magic power; in the pleasures of love it takes high rank. To the physician it reveals deep secrets of the organism. From the hand more than from any other part that nervous fluid emanates, that unsubstantial substance which for want of a better name we call the will. The eye can present a picture of our souls, but the hand announces the secrets of both soul and body. We may teach our eyes, our lips, our brows to reveal nothing; but the hand is no dissimulator: if we desire to know the character of another, no feature compares with it in richness of expression. So fine are the degrees of warmth and cold it can communicate, that they are often missed by the inattentive: yet a man need be no anatomist of human sentiments, to receive this message. The hand has a hundred ways of being dry or damp, burning or frozen, rough or smooth; it may tremble, may grip, may cling, may yield, all in a hundred ways. For the hand presents a high mystery, that has been expressed as the Incarnation of Thought.

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It serves as a pledge of all our sentiments; we talk of holding out a hand to a man, when we mean helping him in distress. To represent the subtle variety of its shapes is the despair of painter and sculptor. In all times magicians have tried to read our destinies in its lines, which certainly are not accidental, but must correspond to facts of life and character. Tact means originally delicacy of hand, and when a woman finds a man lacking in this quality, she condemns him utterly. We speak of the hand of justice, and the hand of God; and any daring enterprise is called a bold *stroke*, as if to imply that its virtue was of the hand.

Every woman gives her hand without reserve, and to learn to recognise her feelings by its magnetic changes is a study, not only surer than physiognomy, but pleasanter. When you have mastered this science, you are already well-armed; you have the thread which will guide you through the labyrinth of the heart, however intricate its windings. You are now able to avoid many of the snares of co-habitation, and have the key to many treasures.

Come! do you seriously believe that you are obliged to be a Hercules, because you sleep every night with your wife? Old womens' tales! Have you never heard the saying, there are more ways of killing a kitten than choking it with cream? An ingenious husband has countless ways of husbanding his forces; it is far easier for him than it was for Mme. de Maintenon, when she told a story and thought to make it do instead of a second course!

There are physiologists, Buffon is one of them, who believe that desire can be more exhausting than any gratification; they argue that desire is a sort of imaginative possession. It bears the same relation to the actual, they say, as the chance experiences of sleep bear to the events of our working life; and must not this lively apprehension of things produce an internal movement, if anything more violent than that produced by the external act? Again, if our acts only exhaust us in so far as they represent previous movements in the mind, how much vital fluid must be consumed in the persistent agitation of desire! In proof of their contention, they point to the face of the passionate gambler, or of the passionate aspirant to fame: such men are a mass of desire, and are not their faces furrowed by its convulsions? You cannot mistake, say these philosophers, the person in whom

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desire is unassuaged! For our part, we find in the theory the germ of a whole system of metaphysics, such as might claim the protection of both Plato and Epicurus: but as physicists ourselves, we cannot do more than hand the idea over to the reader, in its Egyptian kilt as it stands, for him to examine as opportunity may offer.

This we can confidently assert, the greatest error men can fall into is to believe that love is only active in those fugitive moments, which as Bossuet quaintly puts it, are like nails scattered over the wall of life: they appear to be very numerous, but collect them and there is hardly a handful. One of the favourite fields of love is conversation; for whatever other forces may be limited in a lover, his courtesy, his sympathy and his playfulness are inexhaustible. To watch, to divine, to anticipate a mood in the loved one; to make a gift without conferring an obligation, or to reproach without hurting; to double the value of a courtesy by lightly distracting attention; to flatter by deeds rather than by words; to be the entertainer while seeming to be the entertained; to touch without striking, to amuse without offending; to quicken the blood, yet never to evoke a blush; to speak to the soul. . . Ah! you have there all that women ask; there is not one but would give all the nights of Messalina, to have the sensation in her soul that it is being kissed all over. And this favourite luxury of all the sex, what does it cost a man? no more than a little effort of attention! Husbands! this paragraph contains nearly all the secrets of the marriage bed.

But don't let us be too romantic! what we have given you is after all no more than a definition of politeness, with a recommendation to be as polite to your wife as you would to a minister having in his gift the post you seek; it is not meant for an exhaustive definition of love, as some jokers may pretend to think! Now we hear voices on all sides crying, that this book speaks for the wife more often than for the husband;

That the majority of women are unworthy of such delicate attentions, and would take advantage of them;

That many women are naturally licentious, and would not be put off by what they call spiritualities;

That they are a mass of vanity, and can think of nothing but pretty clothes;

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That there is no saying what ideas they won't take into their heads, or what they won't demand next?

That they are often only annoyed at having attention paid to them;

That they are hopelessly stupid; etc., etc.

In answer to all this clamour, we shall here inscribe a phrase between two lines of white, which as Beaumarchais once said, may give it the appearance of a thought.

LXIV. EVERY WOMAN IS TO HER HUSBAND JUST WHAT HE HAS MADE HER.

Let us now sum up the tactics, by which a husband may overcome the difficulties and dangers of a common bed, and so justify our preference for this mode of co-habitation over the other two. He must avail himself of that faithful interpreter, his wife's hand; which held in his own will translate for him her most secret emotions, after spying for him in her heart. He must regulate the temperature of his blood in accordance with hers, and so avoid that sea of cross-purposes in which so many marriages have foundered; also he must never leave her, and he must be able to listen to his own breathing in sleep. In this life we have no benefits without paying for them, and you are not being overcharged for happiness, when you are asked to be polite in the day-time, and at night to know how to sleep elegantly. If I were to add another word, it would be to advise you to imitate modern authors, who make their prefaces longer than their books.

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MEDITATION XVIII: CONJUGAL REVOLUTIONS.

THE innocence of a woman or of a people can be abused for a while, but sooner or later they will find out, however stupid they may be, however clever the government or husband. Humanity would be too happy, were it otherwise! think of all the bullets that never would have hummed over barricades, and of all the deadly words that never would have been uttered at breakfast tables! But marriage has this advantage over politics, there is a time limit beyond which the deception need not be kept up: if the day of reckoning can be postponed till the twentieth year, after which the motive for revolution no longer exists, the Machiavellian husband will be thanked as he deserves. So let us hope, that the means of defence outlined in the preceding Meditations will avail to keep a certain number of husbands, throughout the long but not endless period of danger, safe from the stamping hoofs of the Minotaur! And then, oh husbands! forget not to acknowledge to your Professor, that more than one love affair, darkly planned, perished under the blows of his Hygienics, or was paralysed by his Marital Politics! Yes! we flatter ourselves, that many a lover will be routed by our Personal Means; for husbands will have learned the true politics of concealing politics, and will cry with a livelier inspiration than the philosopher of old, "*Nolo coronari*, I will not be crowned!"

But alas! there is a grim fact we are forced to recognise. If there is peace and security for the despot, it grows insensibly to resemble the calm that precedes a storm: you know that ominous silence, in which as you lie on the parched grass, exhausted by the sultry air, you can hear a grass-hopper a mile away? Such are the atmospheric conditions in which some morning one of our respectable women, and she will be no exceptional wife, will glimpse as with the eye of an eagle soaring in the blue the clever manœuvres, the infernal policy, of which she has for years been the blind victim. But her indignation is turned almost instantly against herself; she rages to think she has been virtuous so long, when she had justification for every sort of infidelity. Now

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we ask: at what age, or at what year in the marriage, is this revolution to be expected? No science of chronology can give the answer, it depends like so many more on the genius of the husband: according as he has been skilful or clumsy in applying the principles of our conjugal doctrine, the day of the Terror will be deferred or brought nearer.

"What! is my husband like this?" we think we hear the indignant voice of a pretty little wife, sadly mystified by our revelations. "He cannot have much love, if he is so calculating in all he does! Then he has suspected me from the very first day? It is monstrous! a woman would be incapable of such double-faced behaviour."

Yes! she would lack the talent; and that is why she is not called on to show her love in a constructive way. But you know now what to expect in the way of thanks—at present! On discovery of your politics there will be an outcry, of which our example gives the general theme: every husband can imagine the variations likely to be introduced in his own case, from his knowledge of the young harpy he has made his life's companion. What most you have to beware of is her moderation: a woman in these circumstances shows little passion, she may even say nothing, giving her mind wholly to dissimulation; in any case her vengeance will be secret.

Observe, you now enter a third stage of marriage: first came the honeymoon, of indeterminate duration; then the crisis which arose on its setting. In that second stage you had only hesitations to combat; now you have a resolute opponent, with all her being set on revenge. Henceforth her face will be a mask, as brazen as her heart; formerly her feeling towards you was one of indifference, you are fast becoming an insupportable presence. Civil war will really have begun when some episode, perhaps quite insignificant in itself, but like the drop of water which makes a full cistern overflow, finally makes you loathsome to your wife. But now a word of consolation! The lapse of time separating that moment, the death-knell of your mutual understanding, from her discovery of your guile may be quite considerable; so that you will have a chance to practise certain means of defence, which we are now going to expound.

So far you have only protected your honour by a sort of

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occult magic; from now on there will be no more conjuring tricks, all your apparatus will be in full view. Where lately it was enough for you to hamper the criminal, now you must strike; you began as a crafty merchant, you end by riding out sword in hand, an officer of the City Guard. Your instructions are to try and disperse the mob without wounding any: rattle your sabre in the scabbard, make your charger prance, and shout ferociously!

But just as the author of this work found a mode of transition from occult to open precepts, so a husband must find some excuse for such an abrupt change in his behaviour; the art of marriage as of literature lies mainly in graceful transitions. To you this will be a vital consideration; for in what a hopeless position would you place yourself, if you gave your wife an extra reason to complain of your behaviour, at this most critical moment in your conjugal career! You have therefore to find justification, not only for the secret tyranny of your first policy, but also for the shameless brutality of your new measures; and the justification must be of such a kind as not to lower you one degree in her esteem, but on the contrary, rather to win her heart! Remember, a power must advance if it is to survive: to win her pardon will only keep you stationary, you must recover some of that charm which seduced her into marrying you.

—But in Heaven's name! you say we are done with magic, but what sort of policy will this be? Is there any at all, of which such things can be expected?

—There is! But when we say there is, a doubt comes into our mind whether there is a husband gifted with the tact, nay the dramatic genius, necessary to appear with success in the scene we have in mind. The part is a treasure for the artist who can handle it; he will have to act, to simulate the very passion whose inward fires are his true motive: for this he will need to be supreme as Talma! What is the passion? it is *jealousy*.

"My husband is jealous. He has been since the beginning of our marriage, only he was too nice to show his feelings. Then he must still love me? Or I shall be able to make him!" Thus will a wife commune with herself, after taking part unconsciously in the beautiful comedy, that you will now amuse yourself by staging: if your part is hard, she will be ready to play up to you,

Meditation XVIII: Conjugal Revolutions

for what you will be asking her to believe is highly flattering to herself, and after all she is a woman. Every act and word and gesture of yours must be nicely calculated to arouse her curiosity; in none must you overdo the suggestion, but rather aim to produce a cumulative effect: you will become an attractive study to your wife, it will be a new occupation for her, exploring the labyrinth of your thoughts, oh mysterious man! Are you not inspired by the idea? You were a simple hypocrite before, but now your behaviour is to be the very quintessence of hypocrisy! Sublime actor, already you are rehearsing in imagination the words of half-reproach, that break from your pent-up heart in spite of you, the tear brushed manfully from your eye as you turn away, the pathos in your voice belying a brutal command, the gestures and the silences, which daily shall be plucking at your wife's heart, till she longs passionately to draw from you the secret of your suffering love! Oh comedy of comedies! to be telling the truth while you are lying; to be feigning a jealousy that jealousy makes you feign, to laugh in your beard while you are tortured in your heart, and so to make your wife believe you are her slave when you are putting the iron collar on her neck! Happy strife, from which each combatant seems to issue victor; happy marriage, in which the love of either has for pedestal the firm rock of secret triumph!

Understand, you will not be supposed to know what is the matter with you: it is she who will explain to you that you are iealous, yes, just a jealous old thing! She will tell you indulgently, how much better she knows you than you know yourself, will prove to you that you have never been able to hide your feelings from her, perhaps will invite you to deceive her if you can! She will be intoxicated with the sense of superiority; and her overflowing soul will find a simple nobility in your character, will make a romance of conduct so beautifully natural. "The dear boy! fancy his thinking he could prevent me, if I wanted to deceive him! But who could want to?" And there you are!

But you must press your advantage. Some evening your feelings will get the better of you, and seizing on some imaginary offence, you will make a terrible scene, in the course of which you will say in your anger things that can never be unsaid: your patience is at an end, and you are going to put your foot down.

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Thus will be promulgated a new code of law. Do not be afraid that your wife will rebel, she has come to need your jealousy; she will positively revel in this severity, the proof of your simple devotion. She will taste the luxury of conscious virtue, and will have immense satisfaction in figuring before the world as a martyr: what delicious condolences she will collect!

At the same time there will be the gratifying thought at the back of her mind, that *should* she ever want an excuse for infidelity, it will be very easy to draw from you some insufferable command. Her imagination smiles at the barriers with which you surround her: how good it will be some day to leap over them! If she is virtuous now in fact, she sees that the *possibilities* of pleasure are doubled for her. Thus women can be possessed simultaneously by two opposite sentiments, love which puts them in our power, and vanity which arms them against us. Love is the motive force of their life, and vanity as it were a brake on the wheels; in fact vanity with them is a kind of jealousy, not for another that they are losing, but for their own independence: without this sort of jealousy they would lose themselves. It is harder to say what is the nature of jealousy in men; perhaps it always defeats its purpose, unless it is used as a weapon in the way we are suggesting. As for being jealous about a woman whose love one possesses, that strikes us as singularly illogical. Yet as soon as jealousy gets reason on its side, it becomes ineffectual! Such is the dilemma this lordly passion is faced with in man: but it may be, that what swaggers under the name of jealousy is simply fear; which would mean, that the man who doubts his wife is really doubting himself. Jealousy is at once the height of egotism and the ruin of self-respect, in other words, it is self gone mad. Women are careful to encourage this ridiculous sentiment, for it brings them silk petticoats and silver-backed brushes, not to speak of diamond rings and necklaces; to them it is the thermometer of their power.

In the case we have imagined for you, it is only because you appear blinded by jealousy, that your wife is taken off her guard: there is only one snare of which women are not suspicious, it is the one they themselves are always setting. And so if a husband is clever enough, when red revolution breaks out in his realm, to give it the direction we have so learnedly indicated,

Meditation XVIII: Conjugal Revolutions

it should be easy for him to make a dupe of his wife. Your marriage will then exhibit the curious characteristics of the asymptotes, that we learn about in geometry, those curves which indefinitely produced never meet the line they are always approaching; for your wife will be always *tending* to minotaurise you, without ever doing so actually. If you prefer, she will be like a person trying to undo one of those knots, that only get tighter the more you fiddle with them; thus she will be working to confirm your sovereignty, in thinking to work for her independence. That prince has shown himself a true artist, whose people are persuaded that he is making war on their behalf, when he is sending them to their deaths to save his throne.

But some husbands may raise the question: by what signs, if the wife is clever at dissimulating, is it to be known that she has at last seen through your first policy, your employment of occult means? This would seem to be a fundamental difficulty, in the way of the execution of our present plan. For answer we refer them to the Meditation entitled The Custom-House, also to that entitled Theory of the Bed: they will find there plenty of means for divining a woman's thoughts, and there are more besides which they should be able to discover for themselves; we do not pretend to have exhausted all the resources of the human intellect. A plan occurs to us immediately! It is said that the Romans, in the annual revels known as the Saturnalia, discovered more about their slaves in ten minutes, than they had learnt in the rest of the year: husbands! institute Saturnalia in your homes. And then don't forget to imitate Gessler, who after seeing William Tell shoot the apple off his child's head, said to himself: "A good hand with the bow, right enough: but suppose he wanted to kill Gessler. . . I must look out for him!"

You understand of course that now, if your wife wants to drink the strong wine of Roussillon, to eat mutton chops, to go out at all hours and to read the Encyclopedia, you will encourage her heartily. At once she will become suspicious, at seeing you drop all your prohibitions suddenly, and will restrain her desires; she will imagine some dark motive in this reversal of policy, and so will be prevented from enjoying the liberty you give her. If there are any bad effects, you must wait to correct them: there is a good future before you, if you play your hand

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right now. In times of revolution, the first consideration must be to give direction to forces you cannot control: thus we erect lightning-conductors, that the destructive force may be directed into the earth.

Take your seats for the last act of the comedy! From the day when the slightest of the First Symptoms was observed to the day of the Conjugal Revolution, a figure has hovered over the scene, seeming half material and half creation of the intellect: it was *the lover*! Now beckoned by her, he stands upon the stage, and with a bow and a skip cries, "Here am I!"

Meditation XIX: The Lover

MEDITATION XIX: THE LOVER.

WE offer the following maxims for your meditation. They are not original; indeed if such truths had had to wait for utterance until the year 1830, one might despair of the human race. But they define so concisely the relationships between you, your wife and her lover, that the master had to sink his pride and reproduce them. You will find here a valuable estimate of the forces of the enemy, and illuminating suggestions for your own policy; and if you find now and then what seems a modern idea, credit it to the Devil, who inspired this work.

LXV. TO TALK OF LOVE IS TO MAKE LOVE.

LXVI. A LOVER EXPRESSES MOST ADMIRATION FOR THE PARTICULAR PERSON, AT THE MOMENT WHEN HE IS IN TRUTH ADDRESSING HIMSELF TO THE SEX.

LXVII. A LOVER HAS ALL THE QUALITIES AND ALL THE FAULTS, THAT A HUSBAND HAS NOT.

LXVIII. A HUSBAND GIVES LIFE TO NOTHING; BUT IF A LOVER GIVES IT TO EVERYTHING, HE ALSO GIVES OBLIVION OF LIFE.

LXIX. ALL A WOMAN'S AFFECTIONS AMUSE A LOVER, HE IS IN ECSTASIES WHEN A HUSBAND WOULD BE CURLING HIS LIP.

LXX. IN SOCIETY, A LOVER'S MANNER TOWARDS A MARRIED WOMAN ALWAYS BETRAYS THE DEGREE OF INTIMACY HE HAS REACHED WITH HER.

LXXI. A WOMAN OFTEN DOES NOT KNOW WHY SHE LOVES, IT IS RARE FOR A MAN NOT TO HAVE SOME EGOISTIC, AND THEREFORE CONSCIOUS MOTIVE, TO THE JEALOUS HUSBAND THIS WILL BE THE LEVER OF ARCHIMEDES, IF HE CAN BUT DISCOVER IT.

LXXII. A HUSBAND OF TALENT NEVER LETS IT BE SEEN THAT HE SUSPECTS HIS WIFE.

LXXIII. A LOVER INDULGES A WOMAN'S EVERY WHIM, AND WILL DO THINGS TO PLEASE HER THAT WOULD OFTEN BE REPUGNANT TO A HUSBAND.

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LXXIV. A LOVER SHOWS A WOMAN HOW MUCH HER HUSBAND HAS HIDDEN FROM HER.

LXXV. WHATEVER SENSATIONS A WOMAN GIVES HER LOVER ARE BUT LENT, AND SHE GETS THEM BACK WITH INTEREST; BUT THIS IS A TRADE IN WHICH HUSBANDS MUST SOONER OR LATER GO BANKRUPT.

LXXVI. A LOVER ONLY TALKS TO A WOMAN OF THINGS SHE IS PROUD OF, BUT A HUSBAND CANNOT REFRAIN (EVEN WHEN HE IS IN LOVE) FROM GIVING ADVICE, IN WHICH THERE IS ALWAYS A NOTE OF BLAME.

LXXVII. WITH A LOVER HIS MISTRESS IS THE MEASURE AND HE THE MATERIAL, IT IS THE REVERSE WITH HUSBANDS.

LXXVIII. A LOVER ALWAYS HAS THE WISH TO MAKE HIMSELF AGREEABLE, BUT WHEN THIS IS OVERDONE IT BECOMES RIDICULOUS: THAT IS THE HUSBAND'S CHANCE.

LXXIX. WHEN A CRIME HAS BEEN COMMITTED, THE POLICE KNOW (UNLESS IT WAS IN A CONVICT SETTLEMENT) THAT THEY CAN LIMIT THEIR SUSPICIONS TO TWO OR THREE PERSONS; LIKEWISE A JEALOUS HUSBAND NEED NOT WATCH THE WHOLE OF SOCIETY.

LXXX. A LOVER IS NEVER WRONG.

LXXXI. A LOVER COMES ONE DAY AND SAYS TO A MARRIED WOMAN: "MADAM, YOU ARE GOING TO TAKE A REST. NO MATTER IF YOU HAVE TO BE AN EXAMPLE TO YOUR CHILDREN; NO MATTER IF YOU HAVE SWORN TO LOVE AND CHERISH YOUR HUSBAND, WHO IF HE HAS HIS FAULTS (AND WHICH OF US HASN'T?) DESERVES YOUR RESPECT: YOU HAVE TO SACRIFICE YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR LIFE TO ME, BECAUSE I HAVE SEEN THAT YOU HAVE A PRETTY LEG. NOT A WORD! NOT A MURMUR! IF I HEAR THE LEAST EXPRESSION OF REGRET, I SHALL PUNISH THE OFFENCE MORE SEVERELY THAN EVER WIFE'S ADULTERY WAS PUNISHED. LET IT BE ENOUGH FOR YOU THAT I SHALL GIVE YOU MORE PLEASURE THAN PAIN, AND—THAT YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE A REST!" INCREDIBLE! THE LOVER IS OBEYED: YES, FOR WHAT DID HIS PREPOSTEROUS SPEECH AMOUNT TO? IN IT ALL SHE HEARD BUT THREE WORDS, REPEATED OVER AND OVER, "I LOVE YOU." A LOVER COMES AS A HERALD, TO PROCLAIM THE BEAUTY, OR THE VIRTUES, OR THE UNDERSTANDING OF A WOMAN: WHAT DOES A HUSBAND PROCLAIM?

Meditation XIX: The Lover

Observe how all these maxims point to the fact, that flattering as it is to be loved, the love a married woman gives is at least as flattering to herself as that she receives, and the same with her lover; the only difference is, that there is more vanity in the woman's love, and more ambition in the man's. For example, the lover of a married woman necessarily contracts many obligations, but hardly three men in a century will be found to discharge them: the love of the rest was mainly ambition, or self-interest in some form. A man always ends by abandoning a mistress, and till then it is not too much to say that he should consecrate all his time to her. Both of them know in their hearts how it will end; as long as human society has existed, he has been ungrateful, and she—has been sublime! Often a great passion excites the pity of the judges who condemn it: but durability is the test, and so the truly great passions go unnoticed. Only think! when a wife will risk such base treatment, how intense must be her admiration for the man! it's a bad chance the poor husband has of competing with him!

We reckon that as a general rule a husband, who employs intelligently the means of defence we have thus far developed, can bring his wife to the age of twenty-seven, not indeed without her having selected a lover, but without her having committed the great offence. Here and there men occur, gifted with such profound genius for marriage, that they are able to keep their wives for themselves, body and soul, right up to the age of thirty; but these cases cause a good deal of scandal, as well as consternation in certain circles. Anyhow the phenomenon is only met with in the provinces, where all live in glass houses: this diaphanous life puts immense power into the hands of man. His advantage is lost at once in a town, having a population of a quarter of a million.

May we regard it then as proved, that thirty is the age for virtue to assert itself? At that critical milestone a wife becomes such a difficult charge, that in order to keep her chained in the conjugal paradise, the husband will have to employ the last weapons remaining in our arsenal: these will be introduced to him successively in the Meditations on Police Methods, on the Art of Coming Home and on Dramatic Effects.

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MEDITATION XX: POLICE METHODS.

THESE consist of all the hindrances, that law and morals and etiquette allow you to put in the way of three simple acts, which for your wife and her lover are life itself: namely, their seeing one another, their speaking to one another, their writing to one another. Police Methods may be combined with several of the means of defence given in preceding Meditations: it is a matter of instinct to know, what proportions of the various elements should be used on each occasion. The whole system of defence is very elastic; a clever husband will bend it, stretch it or compress it, to suit his purpose. But without the aid of Police Methods, no husband can land his wife spotless at the age of forty.

We shall divide this treatise into five paragraphs, dealing with the following subjects:—

- 1 MOUSE TRAPS ;
- 2 CORRESPONDENCE ;
- 3 SPIES ;
- 4 THE INDEX ;
- 5 THE BUDGET.

1 MOUSE TRAPS.

Grave as is the situation at which the husband is now arrived, we will assume that the lover has not altogether acquired *citizen right* within the conjugal walls. Thus it often may happen that a husband, though pretty sure that his wife has a lover, cannot decide on which of several possibles to fix his suspicions. The Professor must now come to the help of those who, through lack of normal powers of divination, are in this difficulty.

When Fouché was head of police, there were three or four houses much resorted to by persons in the highest ranks of life, and the mistresses of these were all devoted to him: their devotion cost the state very considerable sums of money. The minister

Meditation XX: Police Methods

called these houses, which none of the guests ever thought of mistrusting, his *mouse-traps*. More than one arrest was made at the end of a ball, at which the most brilliant society in Paris had "assisted the police!"

The art of laying the toasted cheese, where your wife will not be able to resist putting a white hand into the trap, is the art of never repeating yourself, for she is sure to be on her guard nowadays: we distinguish three main types of mouse-traps, under the following names, the Irresistible, the Fallacious, the Snap.

(a) THE IRRESISTIBLE.

A and B are two husbands, anxious to discover who are the lovers of their respective wives: we will put them at a dinner table, loaded with gorgeous pyramids of fruit and crystal decanters of all shapes, around which a brilliant company are seated. The champagne has circulated freely, all eyes are shining and tongues loosed.

HUSBAND A (*peeling a chestnut*): Well, I like literary men well enough at a distance: to talk to, I must say, I find them unbearable; they want to lay down the law about everything! They're equally objectionable, whether they're talking about something they understand, or butting into other people's subjects; it seems that being an intellectual shows up a man's gifts and his deficiencies alike. If you ask me (*he pops the chestnut into his mouth*), these men of genius are good things that one should take in moderation.

WIFE B (*who has been listening attentively*): You are very difficult to please, Mr. A! (*With a malicious smile*) It seems to me that fools have as many deficiencies as men of genius, with this difference, that they have nothing to make up for them.

HUSBAND A (*on his dignity*): At least you will agree, Madam, that they are not pleasant company?

WIFE B (*sharply*): Who says so?

HUSBAND A (*smiling*): Don't they try to domineer you all the time? They are too vain to attend to what anyone else is saying. . .

THE HOSTESS (*aside to Wife A*): Your husband is very witty; he's worthy of you, my dear! (*Wife A shrugs her shoulders.*)

HUSBAND A (*talking all the time*): Then their habit of picking things to bits, to show you the works! They do it even with love; yes really! all the emotions are only so much machinery

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for them. The funny part is, when they come to make love themselves, we all know they're not such great hands at it!

WIFE B (*biting her lip and interrupting*): It seems to me, Mr. A, that our sex are the only judges of that. But I can well understand men of the world not liking literary men; it is so much easier to criticise them than to compete with them in society!

HUSBAND A (*contemptuously*): I think, Madam, men of the world can attack such writers as we have to-day, without being suspected of envy! I could mention one or two society men, who if they chose to write. . .

WIFE B (*with heat*): Unfortunately some of your friends in the House have written novels: could you read them? To-day the standard is so high, an author cannot express himself on the most trivial subject without studying the history of it, without. . .

HUSBAND B (*to himself, no longer even answering the fair neighbour he had only half attended to all this time*): Ah! so it is M. de L. my wife is in love with, is it? (*naming the author of A Maiden's Dreams*). Funny, I had decided it was Dr. M. But let us make sure.—(*Aloud to his wife*): Perhaps you don't know it, my dear, but you're quite right in what you say. (*Some laughter.*) Upon my word, I'd rather see my drawing-room full of artists and men of letters—(*under his breath*) when society knocks at our door!—than have all the lights of other professions there. At any rate artists talk of things that are not above the heads of ordinary people; for we all have taste—or think we have! But with your lawyers! and worse still, with your doctors! I declare, one hears of nothing but diseases and law-suits, two human infirmities that should never be mentioned in good. . .

WIFE B (*turning from her neighbour, to agree with her husband*): Oh! doctors are unbearable!

WIFE A (*who is seated next to husband B, interrupting him as eagerly*): What ever are you saying? You are greatly mistaken, Mr. B! Nowadays everyone wants to appear what he is not: doctors, since you have mentioned them, make a point of never talking medicine; they discourse on politics, fashions, theatres, anything else! Or they tell anecdotes: some have written books, and better ones than any of your literary men! You must be thinking of Molière's doctors! I can tell you, doctors to-day are very different people!

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HUSBAND A (*to himself*): Aha! so it is Dr. M. my wife is in love with, is it? Fancy that!—(*Aloud*): Possibly, my dear; but when a doctor is taken up with writing, I would not call him in for my dog!

WIFE A (*indignantly*): That's unfair! I know men who hold five or six posts, and the government seems to have confidence in them still. And surely you're the last person who should say such a thing! you who wouldn't be alive now but for Dr. M!

HUSBAND A (*to himself*): That settles it!

(b) THE FALLACIOUS.

ANY HUSBAND (*arriving home*): My dear, we are invited to Mme. de Fischtaminel's concert next Tuesday. I thought of going, as that young cousin of the Minister's was to sing, and I want to meet him again; but I hear now that he has gone to his aunt at Frouville. What would you like to do about it?

HIS WIFE: Darling, you know concerts bore me to death! One sits nailed to a chair for hours, without being able to say a word! Besides, have you forgotten, we're dining with Mother that evening? It would never do for us not to help make a success of her party.

THE HUSBAND (*casually*): Oh, that's right!

(Three days later)

THE HUSBAND (*as he gets into bed*): You won't mind, my angel, if I leave you at your mother's to-morrow evening? I heard to-day that the Count has returned from Frouville, and will be at Mme. Fischtaminel's concert.

THE WIFE (*sharply*): What do you want to go alone for? How mean, when you know how I love music!

(c) THE SNAP.

WIFE: What are you going out for so early this evening?

HUSBAND (*mysteriously*): A distressing affair, my dear; and it's all the worse for me as I have to try and settle it, and I don't see any way . . .

WIFE: What's it about, Adolphus? You can't leave me like this, without telling me what you're going to do! it would be wicked!

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HUSBAND: My dear, that hot-head Prosper Magnan has a duel on with M. de Fontagne, about a chorus-girl. . . What's the matter?

WIFE: Nothing. . . It's very hot here. . . I don't know what I've caught, all day I've had rushes of blood to my face, and my cheeks burning. . .

HUSBAND (*to himself*): As I thought, in love with M. de Fontagnes!—(*Calling upstairs*): Célestine! (*louder*) Célestine, come quickly, your mistress is not well!

So much for mouse-traps! You will understand of course, that for a clever husband there are dozens of ways of setting each variety.

2 CORRESPONDENCE.

To write a letter and post it, to receive the answer, to read and burn it: that is a summary of Correspondence in its virgin form, before Police Methods have come into operation. But observe what infinite resources have been put at the disposal of wives, wishing to save this simple form of Correspondence from marital penetration: civilisation seems to be organised for the very purpose. At every street corner stands the incorruptible pillar-box, with mouth open to all comers, only anxious to receive and digest his diet of secrets. Then there is the fatal institution of *kept letters*. And as if the Post Office had not done enough in his cause, a lover can always find charitable persons (whose charity perhaps goes hand in hand with sweet revenge), ready to slip the precious packet into the intelligent hand of his mistress. Yes, Correspondence has forms as many as Proteus. There are invisible inks even! A young celibate once confided to us, that he had written a letter on the blank wrapper of a book, which a husband was to call for at a shop; and by this carrier it was brought to the hand of his mistress, who had been taught how to make the ink appear. That was a beautiful plan!

Sometimes a jealous husband may watch a woman so closely, that her only opportunity for reading a love-letter is when she is engaged in those mysterious ceremonies, on which not even the most tyrannical husband would intrude. But letters are not the only mode of communicating: every lover is able to create

Meditation XX: Police Methods

a system of telegraphy, and husbands find its whimsical code very difficult to decipher. At a ball, a flower oddly placed in the hair; at the theatre, a handkerchief unfolded on the front of the box; on other occasions, an itching of the nose, the colour of a sash, a hat put on or taken off, a particular dress worn, one song among others sung at a concert, or certain notes struck on the piano, a fixed look at some point agreed on, in fact anything and everything, from the barrel-organ beneath your window (which passes on when a certain blind is pulled up!) to the advertisement in your paper of a horse for sale; all, even yourself, are made to serve for Correspondence! Yes, many a wife has maliciously begged her husband to do some little commission for her, involving a visit to a certain shop or house, at which his presence will convey to a lover a yes or a no.

Here the professor has to confess to his shame, that there is no means of preventing two lovers from corresponding: but it is a loss that marital politics can retrieve, as they never can the loss due to measures of co-ercion. Husband and wife commonly enter into an agreement, to respect the privacy of one another's letters: the clever husband will not only swear to this on beginning married life, but he will conscientiously keep the agreement. For in allowing a woman perfect freedom to write and to receive what letters she likes, you store up for yourself a means of knowing, at what moment she begins to correspond with a lover. Suppose your wife cannot trust you not to open a letter, she has all the resources we have indicated, and her Correspondence will be wrapped in a darkness you can never penetrate: it is true you can fall back on the methods of divination, outlined in the Meditation on the Customs-House; but a complete husband will see the letter itself, which a woman writes to or receives from a lover. At this stage of the war, you cannot spare time or energy for a long study of looks and gestures, to discover a fact which need never have been hidden from you! Still, however much your wife trusts you, she will not want to arouse your suspicion by leaving on the hall table frequent letters to the same man: well, plenty of other signs will show the intelligent husband, when the Correspondence is being carried on at such high pressure.

Now judge from the following anecdote, what powers of repression are put into your hands by a correspondence, especially

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when you have dictated it yourself! To achieve this, without even the writer suspecting what is happening, will be one of the finest of your Police Methods: impossible as it sounds, it has been done.

A young barrister had married a girl who had little love for him: but that she loved him at all was to him a supreme happiness; and his frenzied devotion revealed to him some of the principles, enunciated in this important section of our book. At the end of a year of marriage, he perceived that his darling Anna was in love with a stock-broker's clerk: name, Adolphus; age, twenty-five. This young man was very handsome, and as fond of pleasure as any celibate alive; but he was prudent in expenditure, strictly honourable, and kind at heart. It was his more brilliant attractions that made him a dangerous rival; he sat a horse unusually well, was witty in conversation and always well turned out, paying special attention to the waving of his glossy black hair: indeed he would have done credit to a duchess. The poor barrister was small and ugly, a thoroughly unromantic figure and—a husband! Anna herself was tall and comely, with almond eyes, a transparent skin and well-modelled features; while a passionate temperament lit up her face, adding to it a magic charm. The couple were badly off, as Maître Lebrun, including what he made at the bar, had not more than twelve thousand francs a year. Such was the situation; and it is not surprising if Madam had an admirer, and welcomed his attentions.

One evening Lebrun came home, dragging his steps like a man thoroughly done up. He went into his study to work, but soon came out shivering: his wife decided that he had fever, and he was put to bed at once. He professed to be very disturbed about his clients, especially a poor widow, who might lose all she had if he failed to represent her at a conference that was to be held the next day: the appointment was made with the other parties, and it seemed impossible that he would be in a fit state to appear. He closed his eyes for a quarter of an hour, then tossing in his bed, he called his wife in a feeble voice, and begged her to write a letter for him; he wanted to ask a great friend of his to take his place at the conference. He dictated a long letter; and while his wife wrote, he watched carefully how much of the folded sheet was being covered. When the first half was covered

Meditation XX: Police Methods

on both sides, he had just finished telling his colleague in glowing terms, what joy it would bring his client if the matter were satisfactorily settled: at the top of the second half came the words: "My dear friend, go, I beseech you, go at once to Mme. de Vernon's house; you will be eagerly expected: her address is 7 Rue du Sentier. Forgive me for not telling you more; I rely on your good sense to guess, what I cannot explain. Ever yours, ——."

Give me the letter to read through," said the barrister, "that I may be sure there are no mistakes, before signing it." The victim of the plot, into whose head it never entered to suspect this letter, bristling as it was with technical terms—for the most barbarous jargon of the law had purposely been used—handed it to her husband. No sooner had Lebrun the fictitious letter in his possession, than he began to writhe and groan in bed, begging his wife to fetch him some medicine from another room. During the two minutes she was absent, he leaped nimbly out of bed, and hid the letter in a drawer, taking and folding a blank sheet of note-paper to resemble it. When his Anna returned, he solemnly put this blank sheet into an envelope, and gave it to her to address to his friend; which she did in her innocence, and gave it to a servant to post. Lebrun's anxiety left him from that moment, and soon he appeared less feverish; he had a good night, though in the morning he thought it wise to hint occasionally at vague fears.

Two days later, he took the precious manuscript out of the drawer, tore off and destroyed the first half on which most of the writing was, and altered one letter of what remained, that is to say of the passage we have quoted: he carefully erased the "s" of "yours" in the conclusion, thus changing it from the most formal to the most affectionate expression. He had never signed the document, and now it was enough to put a dash, for a lover would of course understand the danger of a wife's signing her name. Folding the half-sheet of innocent treachery, Maitre Lebrun sealed it up and addressed it, then calling his wife's maid, he gave it to her, saying, "Your mistress wants you to take this to M. Adolphe, be as quick as you can!" He was sure she would know the way! Presently he made an excuse to his wife for going out (for he was now considered well enough), and himself walked to the address in the Rue Sentier given in the letter. It was the

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house of a friend, whom he had taken into his confidence; and there he waited quietly for his rival. Nor had he long to wait; the lover came striding to the door, off his head with joy, and asked for Mme. de Vernon; he was shown up, and found himself face to face with M. Lebrun, who met him with a cold stare, and a calm implacable light in his eyes. "Sir!" said the husband to the trembling clerk, "you are making love to my wife, you are trying to win her affections: I can hardly blame you, for at your age I should have done the same. But Anna is in great distress; you have destroyed her peace of mind, she is tortured by demons of desire. And so she has confided her trouble to me, has told me everything. That letter she wrote you was the result of a quarrel we had: but it was nothing, we soon made it up; then she told me the story and asked me to come in her place. However, I am not going to plead with you, Sir, you must know without my telling you, that to persist in your attempts at seduction can only bring unhappiness to her you pretend to love. She would not only lose the respect of her husband, but ultimately would lose yours also; and the sufferings of her children will carry the effects of your crime far down the future. Least of all do I want to speak of the bitterness you will have brought into my own life,—I have never known much happiness, anyhow! — I am here, Sir, to tell you quite simply, that the least renewal of your advances to my wife, a single step in that direction, will be the signal for a murder; yes! for a duel would not give me the certainty of lodging a bullet in your heart." (The young barrister looked as if death already stared him in the face.) "Come, Sir!" the husband went on, in a kinder voice, "you are young and, I think, generous-hearted: prove the sincerity of your devotion to my wife, by making a sacrifice for her happiness; give her up, never see her again! And I'll tell you what, if you absolutely must have one of the family, I have a young aunt who has surrendered to no one yet: she is both rich and attractive; you shall undertake her conversion, and that will be better than upsetting a married woman." This mixture of joking and threats, with the dramatic look and voice of the husband, made an extraordinary impression on the lover: he remained for a minute rooted to the ground, like all passionate people at his worst in an emergency, then vanished without a word. If Anna ever

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took a lover,—pure supposition, of course,—it certainly was not Adolphus.

This story will help you to understand, what a two-edged weapon Correspondence may be, as useful in the husband's defence as in the wife's in consequence. So you will encourage Correspondence, just as the prefect of police takes care that all street-lamps are lit in Paris.

3 SPIES.

To stoop to begging information from one's servants, to buy their treachery and so fall lower than them, well, it's no crime: it might be called dishonourable, most certainly it is grossly stupid! You put a blind and absolute trust in a servant, whom you know to be betraying his mistress: what reason have you to think him more loyal to you than to her? Enough! we have given judgment on this question, without leave to appeal.

Consider how nature, that wise and kindly mother, has surrounded the mother of a family with spies, sharper and surer than any in the world, yes and more discreet: they speak without opening their mouths, see all without seeming to attend. One day a friend of mine met me on the boulevard, and brought me home to dinner with him. When we arrived the meal had already begun, and his wife was handing plates of steaming soup to her two daughters. 'One of my *first symptoms*,' said I to myself. We joined them at the table; and as he sat down the husband asked, but more for something to say than to discover secrets, "Any visitors to-day?"

"Not a soul!" his wife answered, without looking at him.

As long as I live, I shall never forget the sudden opening of four little eyes, as the two children looked at their mother: especially, I remember the face of the elder little girl, who must have been about eight; it expressed surprise and understanding at once, curiosity and discretion, candour and mystery. The speed with which their expressive eyes were opened was equalled by that with which the lids, like pleasant window-blinds in summer, were discreetly lowered till the lashes lay on the white cheeks.

Pretty fawn-like creatures, for the nine years before you marry the terror of a mother, however quiet she may be! is it an instinct of your species or only the gift of a few, to know the

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presence of a man through walls and doors, catching with your young ears the faintest echo of his voice; and then with your young minds to judge the significance of all you hear and see, it may be a single word of a visitor or the slightest gesture of your mother? Ah! it is not for nothing that girls are the favourites of their fathers, and boys of their mothers; this preference is based on the experience of countless generations.

Truly childish is an organised system of spies; you would be like the beadle who put egg-shells in his bed, thinking to have it to himself, and all the satisfaction he got was to hear his crony remark in the night, "You might have broken them a bit smaller!" Yes, you have better means than that at your disposal! One is reminded of the remark of Marshal de Saxe, and the poor consolation it was to La Popelinière, the time they discovered together the famous twisting chimney invented by the Duc de Richelieu: "That's the finest horn-work I've ever seen!" cried the victor of Fontenoy. Let us hope that your espionage will not disclose anything so serious: developments of this sort are fruits of the Civil War, and we have not come to that yet.

4 THE INDEX.

The Pope only puts *books* on the Index; but you, inspired by our gospel of marriage, will mark men and things with the seal of your disapproval.

IT WILL BE AN OFFENCE FOR MADAM TO TAKE A BATH ANYWHERE BUT AT HOME;

AN OFFENCE FOR MADAM TO RECEIVE VISITS FROM A MAN YOU SUSPECT OF MAKING LOVE TO HER, OR FROM ANYONE WHO MIGHT BE INCLINED TO HELP ON THE AFFAIR;

AN OFFENCE FOR MADAM TO GO FOR A WALK WITHOUT YOU; AND SO ON.

But the variety of circumstances produced in so many marriages by the character and habits of the parties, and again by the persons with whom they come in contact, requires such frequent additions to the Index and such frequent erasures, that as a friend of the author remarked, the document might be fairly entitled the History of the Vacillations of the Conjugal Church. Only two matters can be made the subject of fixed rules, namely walks in the street

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and visits to the country. It can be laid down once and for all, that a husband should never take his wife, still less let her go by herself, on a visit to the country. By all means have a country place of your own, where you can live together, receiving only women or old men, and never letting your wife go out alone: but as for taking her to a friend's house, even for half a day, it is a policy worthy of the ostrich! To keep an eye on a woman in the country is a sheer impossibility! Can you be in every hedge at once, are you a squirrel to leap from tree to tree, or an Indian to follow tracks in the grass, which may be plain enough in the evening, but under the reviving influence of dew and sun will be invisible the next day? Are you an army to man every breach in the wall surrounding a park? Oho! the spring and the country, they are the sword and shield of the celibate! Once a wife has arrived at the crisis, a husband should remain in town preparing for war, unless he takes pleasure in ceaseless and impossible spying.

The rule as to walks in the street is simple. Does Madam wish to take the air in the Bois de Boulogne, to go to a garden-party or a theatre, to buy a dress or look in the shop windows? very well, Madam shall go out and do what she wants, in the honourable company of her lord and master. Should she wait till you are occupied in some important business, and then try to draw from you a careless consent to her going out, which will mean going on some expedition anything but careless; especially if she should evidently be laying herself out to obtain this, bringing into play all her powers of fascination, practising all her woman's wiles; then your professor charges you to be won over, to be unable to resist the seductions you have seen through, only to sell your consent dearly, making sure you convince this melting creature with the soul of steel, that the importance of your business makes it impossible for you to quit your desk. But the moment she sets foot in the street, be at a window to see which direction she takes; and do not let her go fifty steps, without stealthily opening the door to follow her. Keep her in sight as long as she is out; and get ahead of her on the return, so that you may be discovered still sitting at your desk.

There may exist some Werthers, whose delicate souls would shrink from carrying out such an inquisition: but we maintain

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that such conduct has nothing base in it; they would have to condemn equally the householder who gets up in the night and looks out of his window, to see that the peaches on his wall are safe. By shadowing your wife on her walk you may obtain, in time to prevent a crime, exact knowledge as to one of those sets of rooms, which so many lovers hire under assumed names. If it should happen (which God forbid!) that your wife enter a house about which you already have suspicions, occupy yourself in ascertaining if there is any possible exit besides the front-door.

Did your wife take a cab? well, that needn't disturb you. Did not a prefect of police, deserving of a crown of gold from the tribe of husbands, erect on every cab-rank a little hut or shelter, in which a record is kept of the address given to every driver? This incorruptible guardian of public morals can say, whither goes and whence comes each one of the gondolas of Paris.

One of the most vital of your Police Methods will be, not only to accompany your wife on all her shopping expeditions, but to keep an eye out to detect any message or sign of understanding, that might pass between her and her dress-maker or milliner; even when she is at a furniture store getting things for the house, watch every person who serves her: your experience in the custom-house should be of use to you here. Also, if your wife shall have found a pretext to go out in your absence, and tells you she has been to a certain shop, go there the next day, and try to find out if she was speaking the truth. But your own jealousy will tell you even better than this Meditation, what are the resources of conjugal tyranny: so we will make an end here of refining on the subject.

5 THE BUDGET.

In sketching the portrait of a competent husband (see the Meditation entitled *The Predestined*), we strongly urged you to hide from your wife the true amount of your income; and this is the basis on which we shall now establish our financial policy. It may surprise you to hear, we hope to discredit the wide-spread opinion, that a wife should not be trusted with the administration of the conjugal revenues: this we hold to be a popular error, leading to much unpleasantness in marriage, and quite unnecessary if the husband secretly reserves a small portion of his income.

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Let us consider the question first on its sentimental side, and secondly on its financial.

To give your wife a little list of the annual expenditure, that you think sufficient for the running of the house and for her personal needs, and to dole out the amount to her by twelfths every month, bah! there is something petty about such a method, it makes you seem close and shabby, however generous your estimate may have been; nor is it likely to appeal to a generous husband any more than to his wife. You will believe me, that much soreness is often produced in this way. It is likely enough that during the first honeyed years of marriage, the monthly dole may be the occasion of touching little scenes; it may be delivered in a tasteful purse, to the accompaniment of some joking oratory ending in a kiss: but a day will come, when some thoughtless extravagance of the wife's will force her to apply to the treasurer for a loan. We assume that in such a case you would make good the deficit, without needlessly humiliating the petitioner: the House of Commons votes the money required by ministers, but it groans and grumbles; you will pay compliments while paying the bill. Good!

But in the days of the crisis these demands will become the rule rather than the exception, the monthly dole will never be sufficient: for there will be increased expenditure in dresses and hats and scarves, not to mention the cost of secret meetings and messages. And as the extra sum has to be wheedled out of the very person who is being betrayed, there begin a series of scenes the most odious and degrading, that a woman can ever have to go through. It is the lowest degree of human corruption, the prostitution of the soul itself: yet the husbands are rare who reject the system that is responsible. Only the noblest and most high-minded of men, such as value the liberty and purity of the soul above all the gold in the world, and would hold any passion more pardonable than a lie, have the delicacy of instinct to divine what game the wife is playing: to the majority of husbands this ghastly situation is the beginning of most flattering scenes of love; they see the wife they feared they had lost become all tenderness, she seems to throb with passion as the string of a harp. Imagine her circling round you adoringly, then twining her arms round you and pressing you to her bosom: whatever

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you demand she will grant with a loving smile, her words will be all honey,—why should she be grudging of her sweetness when she is selling it? Bah! she has fallen lower than any street-walker, she is prostituting herself to her husband! There is money in her lascivious kiss, money in her every flattering word! Ah! and what do you think is in her heart for you, while she plies this trade? she has no heart left, it is turned to lead. Have you seen a money-lender, suave and treacherous, weighing up at a glance the future value of some titled youth, to whom he gives a deed to sign? Just so does your wife weigh up the value to her of your lusts, as desperately she turns from one wile to another, adding pound to pound till her expenses are met. You will be clever if you see through it, and a saint if you do not then shut one eye. For nature has endowed woman with treasures of coquetry, which civilisation has increased ten-fold, what with dresses and hats, furs and embroideries.

“If I ever marry,” said a famous general of the Old Army, “I shall not put a half-penny in the shopping basket.”

“What will you put in it, General?” asked a young woman.

“The key of my cash-box.”

The maiden made a pretty little grimace of approval, and slowly nodded to herself, the movement of her head suggesting the compass-needle swinging to the North: as she raised her face to the speaker again, there was an expression in it that seemed to say, “I should not mind marrying the General, in spite of his forty-five summers.”

On the financial side of the question it will be enough to ask, what interest do you expect a woman to take in a business, in which she is only engaged as a book-keeper? Now examine the alternative system.

In making your wife sole administrator of two thirds of your income, under the impression that it is the whole, you not only make her self-respecting by your confidence, you also give her a high opinion of your generosity, a quality that always stirs the heart of a woman. The responsibility she bears will make her in a sense her own keeper, and any prohibitions she imposes on herself will be far more effective than yours: you have kindled a fire in her soul, and may trust her almost certainly never to demean herself. But if you still need means of defence, think what resources

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you have in this system. Like quotations on the Stock Exchange, that give a sure indication of the degree of confidence in the government, you have in your home daily quotations of the morality of your wife. For example, she will make it a point of honour, during the first happy years of marriage, to give you every luxury possible for your money: epicurean dinners will be served to you in the most attractive style, your furniture and carriages will always be the last word in elegance; while in a drawer she will keep a sum of ready money, consecrated to the needs of the well-beloved. That drawer will give the first indication of changing sentiments; gradually it will be more often found empty, and His Lordship will be told that he is spending too much. The economies ordered by the Commons bear most heavily on the clerks at fifty pounds a year: in the conjugal state it is you who are the clerk at fifty pounds a year. Secretly you can afford to smile, for all the time you will have been putting by a third of your annual income, and by now will have amassed a considerable capital: you are like Louis XV., who kept a little hoard of his own, *against a rainy day*, as he put it. When your wife begins to talk habitually of economy, it will be equivalent to another drop in price on the Exchange. Thus you can gauge exactly the progress of a lover, while furnishing yourself with the sinews of war: you have an advantage both ways. *E sempre bene.*

Even if your wife should so far abuse your confidence as to squander a considerable sum, even if she should incur large debts unknown to you, the amount could hardly equal (say) the six years accumulation of a third of your income; and then see what a weapon this extravagance has put into your hand, for the slaying of the Minotaur! But this will be dealt with more fully in the Meditation on Dramatic Effects. Understand that the secret of your sinking-fund must never come out till after your death: any time that you come to the rescue of your wife, let it be thought that you have been lucky at play, or that you have borrowed from a friend. This will be enough now on the conjugal budget; we have enunciated its true principles.

A last word on Police Methods in general. This cause has its saints and martyrs as well as others: a single instance will show, that if husbands take stern measures with their wives, they need to be equally watchful on their own account.

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There was an old money-lender living at T—— (a town given up to pleasure if ever one was!) who married a young and beautiful woman; and he was so proud of her and so jealous, that love triumphed over avarice: he gave up his business in order to devote himself entirely to guarding her, in other words, he became a miser about his wife instead of about his gold. I confess I owe many of the principles of this Meditation to an account given me by a fellow-enthusiast, who had the opportunity of studying this interesting conjugal phenomenon. To give you an idea of it, I need only mention a single fact. When the aged miser took his wife to the country, he never went to bed without secretly raking the gravel of his paths; for the fine sand of the terrace he had even a rake specially made. All day he would be studying the footmarks of his household, so as to recognise each one; and in the morning early he would go round the house, to see who had been abroad in the night. Pointing to his park, he once said to my friend, "All these are full-grown trees, and you see how they are kept; there is neither undergrowth nor young plantations for a person to hide in."

His wife fell in love with a charming young man from the neighbouring town; they met at a ball, and at first sight a flame was kindled in their two hearts, which burned steadily for nine years. Whenever they danced, though it was only their perfumed gloves that touched, the trembling of the fingers confessed the depth of their passion; and from the beginning they found joy in such experiences, were thrilled by sensations that would be nothing to more fortunate lovers. My friend was perhaps the only man to win the confidence of this mystic lover, and one day the young man led him into a room of his own, where he showed him, preserved under a glass case with more care than the most precious jewels, some flowers that had fallen from his mistress' head in the whirl of a dance, and some leaves that had brushed her shoulder as she passed under a tree. He had even cut out and kept a sod of the park, which bore the slender imprint of her foot. "I seemed to hear," my friend told me afterwards, "the deep beating of his heart, amid the silence that fell on us in this museum of love. I could only raise my eyes to the ceiling, as if to confide to Heaven feelings which no words could express. 'Poor tender humanity!' I thought . . . At last I ventured

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to say, in a questioning tone, 'Madam was telling me, that one night when there was a dance at her house, you were found fainting in the card-room?'"

"'I might well faint with emotion,' he answered, turning away as the blood rushed to his cheek, 'I had dared to kiss her arm!' After a moment he gripped my hand, and with a look that seemed directed to my very heart, he whispered passionately, 'Her husband . . . The gout is very near a vital part!'"

But soon after this the old man made a great recovery, he seemed to have taken a new lease of life: then suddenly, he took to his bed one morning, and in the evening he was dead. Symptoms of poisoning were so evident in his last hours, that the local justice ordered an inquiry, and the two lovers were arrested. When their trial came on at the assizes, the scene was the most heart-rending ever presented to a jury. In the preliminary examination, each had openly confessed to the crime, their only care being to shelter one another; so there were two guilty persons to be judged, when justice only required one. The pleading consisted in the attempts of each to give the other the lie; and no case was ever argued more passionately, for they attacked one another with all the devotion of a great love. The altar at which they were united was the dock, and a warder stood between them. Both were found guilty by a jury in tears; and none of those barbarous persons, who had the curiosity to see them led to the scaffold, can ever speak of it without a catch in the voice. Religion drew from them an expression of penitence for the crime, but not an abjuration of their love. The scaffold was their nuptial couch, and beneath it they lie together in the long night of death,

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MEDITATION XXI: THE ART OF COMING HOME.

UNABLE to control their transports of anxiety, many husbands commit the error, on their return home, of charging into the drawing-room as if to terrorise their wives; they are like bulls in the arena who rip open the horses of the picadors, and then maddened by the banderillas planted in their shoulders, make the matador and all his retinue of toreros skip for their lives. You will know the wise husband by the gentle, timid air with which he comes in, like Mascarille expecting to be beaten with a stick, and becoming as gay as a lark if he get a smile from his master! You should have a look on your face as if to say: "Yes, my darling, I know what mischief you might have done, if you had been so inclined: another woman might have thrown everything in the house out of the window, and you have not broken so much as a pane of glass! God bless you for your goodness! Always behave like this, and you can be sure of my gratitude." But while these are the thoughts expressed by your demeanour, to yourself you will be saying, "Yes, he has been!" or "No, not to-day!" Always to wear a pleasant expression at home is one of the conjugal laws, to which there can be no exception.

But the art of only going out for the purpose of returning at a moment, when Police Methods have given you knowledge of an appointment, the art of nicely timing your return, ah! this demands a subtlety of mind, that no human teaching can supply; you must go to the events of life, bringing with you an inborn faculty of comprehension. The best we can do is to enrich this book with a story, worthy of a place in the archives of the Abbey of Thelema. It will reveal to you a new means of defence, already hinted at in an aphorism of the professor's, and will give you a practical illustration of the principles of this Meditation: which after all is the best form of instruction.

M. de B——, an artillery officer holding the post of secretary to Louis Bonaparte, King of Holland, found himself at the castle of Saint-Leu, near Paris, where Queen Hortense had her court. The young officer was fair and fascinating; but he was affected

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in his manners and seemed just a little too pleased with himself, his head having been turned perhaps by the success of the military party. Apart from this he was intelligent enough, and paid very pretty compliments. Why his gallantry became unbearable to all the Queen's ladies, history does not relate: can it have been that he had offered the same homage to them all and they had been comparing notes? Just so! but he knew what he was doing, it was a deep game! He truly adored, at least for the moment, a certain Countess among them: who of course dared not defend her lover, as this would have given away her secret; strange as it may seem, the cruellest epigrams on the officer fell from the pretty lips of the Countess, in whose heart his image was enshrined. Yes, there is a certain sort of woman rather attracted by conceit in men, provided they are also well-tailored and can show an elegant boot; themselves they are generally given to affectations of sensibility, are ready to swoon at the least indelicacy, and so on. Such was the character of the Countess, with the important difference, that the delicacy in her case was perfectly genuine. She belonged to the family of N——, in which good manners are a sacred tradition. Her husband the Count was a son of the old Duchess of L——, but he had bowed his head to the newly-risen star: it was Napoleon who had created him a count, and he had hopes of obtaining an embassy. In the mean-time he contented himself with a chamberlain's office; and if he left his wife at the Queen's court, it was doubtless from motives of ambition.

"My son," said his mother one morning, "your wife takes after her family: she is in love with M. de B——."

"You're joking, mother! Why, only yesterday he borrowed a hundred pounds from me!"

"If you care no more for your wife than for your money, let us say no more about it!" replied the old lady drily.

The prospective ambassador set himself to watch the pair, and in the course of a game of billiards, in which he was the Queen's partner against his wife and the bumptious officer, he obtained one of those proofs, as trivial in appearance as they are convincing to a diplomat. "It has gone further than they know themselves!" said the Count to his mother that evening; and while he poured out his grief at this bitter discovery, the wily and experienced

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mind of the Duchess was quietly at work. She saw that her son loved his wife, who on her side, if she had not exactly what could be called principles, had not been married long enough to lose all sense of duty: the Duchess judged that there were still hopes of this delicate and unspoilt soul. She undertook to sound her daughter-in-law; she even went further, and promised her son to ruin M. de B—— irretrievably.

One evening, when the various games were finished, and the ladies of the court were engaged familiarly in exchanging scandal, a pastime in which the Queen did not disdain to take part, our Duchess raised cries of indignation in the royal circle by announcing the love-affair between her daughter-in-law and M. de B——. The opinions of all were taken, and it was unanimously decided, that the lady who should succeed in getting the officer banished from Court should have rendered a signal service to all; for they all had reason to hate him, and Queen Hortense was weary of his presumption. The Duchess undertook to organise a plan, and all the fair conspirators promised to co-operate in anything she should attempt. Within forty-eight hours the old lady had wormed her way into the confidence both of her daughter-in-law and of the lover; three days later she invited the officer to a private lunch, promising him an afternoon alone with his lady. It was arranged that he should start in the morning for Paris, but should return secretly. The Queen and her ladies would be out, as a stag-hunt had been announced for that day: the Countess of course would feign indisposition. There was nothing to fear from the Count, as he had gone to Paris on a mission for the King.

For the full understanding of the Duchess' plot, we must explain the arrangements of the cramped apartments occupied by the Countess in this rustic castle. They were situated on the first floor, at the end of a long corridor; and were just above the Queen's private suite. The door opened direct into the bed-room, to right and left being two smaller rooms, little more than closets: the one on the right was used as a dressing-room, while the other was being fitted up by the Countess as a boudoir. At present there was little more than four bare walls, with a grey wash on them, a carpet on the floor and a small divan: the rest of the furniture was expected in a few days. The Duchess had not formed her

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treacherous plan without taking all these circumstances into account: they might seem insignificant, but as it happened they served her admirably.

Towards eleven o'clock a dainty lunch was being prepared in the bedroom. The officer, now on his way back from Paris, was gashing with his spurs the flanks of his horse. He reached the castle just in time, gave his noble animal into the care of a groom, scaled the wall of the park, slipped through a side door and flew upstairs to the room, without having been seen by a soul, not even a gardener. You may remember, artillery officers at that time wore incredibly tight trousers, and a high shako, or pot-shaped cap: it was a very effective uniform on parade, but apt to be inconvenient at a private appointment. Well, the lunch went off splendidly, everyone in high spirits: if the Countess and her mother-in-law would touch no wine, our officer remembered the proverb, and was sharpening his wits and kindling his passion with ample potations. When the meal was finished, he gave a look at the Duchess, who like a practised accomplice got up, saying casually, "I think I hear a carriage!" And so she left the lovers. But in two or three minutes she rushed in, crying, "It's the Count!" and hustled the pair of them into the half-empty boudoir. "Don't make a sound!" she gasped, then clutching the distracted man, "Here, take your shako!" she scolded. The table with the remains of the lunch she pushed into the dressing-room on the other side, and hurriedly got the bedroom in order, just in time for the entry of her son.

"I hear my wife is ill," said the Count: "But where is she?"

"Oh, no!" said the mother, "it didn't last; she's hunting with the others as far as I know." At the same time she turned her eyes sideways to the door of the boudoir, and gave a jerk of her head in that direction, as much as to say, "Hush! they're in there!"

"Are you mad," the Count whispered hoarsely, "to shut them up together?"

"You have nothing to fear," whispered the Duchess with a grim smile; "if you knew what I put in his wine..."

"Well, what did you put in it?"

"The most rapid of all purgatives!"

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Who should enter at this point but the King of Holland! he came to question the Count as to the result of his mission. The Duchess contrived at last, by one of those mysterious utterances of which women are masters, to oblige his majesty to take the Count away to his own apartments. But in the meanwhile what was happening in the boudoir? As soon as the two lovers were shut in, and the horrified Countess recognised her husband's voice, she whispered bitterly: "What a situation you have got me into, fool that I was!"

"Mary darling, my love for you will be compensation for all your sacrifices, I shall be faithful till death!—(*Aside to himself*) My God, what a pain!"

But the young wife only wrung her hands in mute dismay, as she heard her husband's step near the door; after a minute she hissed out, "No love could pay for such terrors. . . Don't come near me, Sir!"

"Oh my love, my treasure!" said her companion, humbly kneeling, "I shall be to you all you could desire! Order me whither you will, I shall go; call me at any hour, I shall come. I shall be the humblest and at the same time—Saints above, it's colic!—the most constant of lovers. Mary darling! won't you forgive me when I tell you—What shall I do? it's awful! I must! . . ."

The gallant officer rushed to the window, thinking to open it and fling himself out into the garden; but there he saw Queen Hortense and her ladies, just returned from the hunt. Again he turned to the Countess, looked at her desperately for a moment, then putting his hand on the most significant part of his uniform, exclaimed in an agonised voice: "You must excuse me, Madam, it's impossible for me to hold it in!"

"What are you saying? are you out of your senses?" said the lady, who saw that something more than love was distorting the face before her.

But the officer was beyond speech now: with tears of helpless rage in his eyes, he squatted down on the shako, in the corner where he had thrown it. . .

"Well, Countess, are you better?" said the Queen as she came into the bedroom, having passed the King and Count in the passage: "But where is she?"

Meditation XXI: The Art of Coming Home

"Madam!" cried the Countess, bursting out of the boudoir, "don't go in there! for God's sake don't go in!" She said no more, for she saw all the other court ladies in the room; she only gave an appealing look to the Queen. Now Hortense was both indulgent and curious; she made a sign, and her ladies retired. To cut a long story short, M. de B—— left for the front the same evening; on arrival he joined the first attacking force, sought death and found it. He was a brave man, if he was no philosopher.

It is related of one of our most celebrated painters, that having successfully made love to a friend's wife, he had to endure the same horrors at a secret meeting, by contrivance of the husband; only in this case the vengeance was overdone, for in trying to double the shame by inflicting it on both parties, the husband really halved it: neither his wife nor her lover felt the need to take any such desperate course as M. de B——, since both had been overtaken by the same necessity.

To return to our subject, from which we have wandered a little: a husband's behaviour on coming home will depend very much on circumstances. Here is an example; the circumstances are perhaps a little extreme, but the story furnishes a pretty illustration of our point.

Lord Catesby was a man of prodigious strength. One day he returned early from a fox-hunt, to which his going had doubtless been a feint; and seeing over a hedge of his park an unusually fine horse, he rode in that direction to admire it, for horses were his passion. Arrived at the spot, whom should he see but Lady Catesby? Little jealous as he was, he jumped over the hedge to her assistance, landing on the back of a gentleman. Picking him up by the belt, just in time to prevent the mischief, His Lordship slung him over the hedge on to the road. "Please to remember, Sir," he said coolly to the lover, "that it is to me you must apply, when you have any business here."

"Very good, my Lord," said the other, "and now will you have the goodness to throw over my horse?"

But the humorous lord had already given his wife his arm, and was saying to her as they walked away, "I have to complain, my dear creature, that you did not warn me, I must give you the love of two: henceforth I shall love you for this gentleman every second day, and for myself the remaining days."

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Lord Catesby's behaviour passes in England for a perfect example of how to meet a situation on coming home: it cannot be denied, that he combined very happily the action with the word. To sum up, it may be said of this art of returning home, that as it is a further development of the politeness and dissimulation taught in our previous Meditations, so it is a constant preparation for the dramatic effects, which are the subject of our next.

Meditation XXII: Dramatic Effects

MEDITATION XXII: DRAMATIC EFFECTS.

IN literature there is a term, *peripetia*, signifying a striking effect on the stage, carefully led up to by an author: to introduce a *peripetia* into the conjugal drama is a means of defence, as easy to contrive as it is certain of success. But while we strongly advise its employment, we must not conceal from you, that there are certain dangers attached thereto. The conjugal *peripetia* may be compared to those timely fevers which, if they do not carry off an invalid, restore him to complete health; for when the *peripetia* succeeds, it throws a wife far back into the sage regions of virtue. The application of this idea to marriage, let me tell you, is the very latest discovery of modern science: Saint Bartholomew's Eve, the Suicide of Lucrece, Napoleon's two landings at Fréjus, were examples of the *peripetia* in politics. You may not be able to operate on such a vast scale, but proportionately your dramatic effects will be no less far reaching, will cause no less stir in the conjugal theatre. However, as the art of developing a situation by natural changes of scene is the highest proof of intellect, and further, as the most powerful dramatic shock is required, to recall a woman to virtue once her foot has left a print on the golden sands of vice, the graduate in conjugal law is forced to confess his inability to frame rules for this art. The circumstances are as changeable as time itself, and can only be seized by that indefinable instinct we call genius, which is not like a grammar that can be taught in class-rooms. To use an expressive word, that Diderot, d'Alembert and Voltaire all attempted to naturalise, a conjugal *peripetia* must be *subodorated*. So our only means will be to sketch as well as we can some conjugal situations, in imitation of the ancient philosopher, who after trying in vain to find an explanation of *movement*, simply started to walk up and down, in the hope that its laws would reveal themselves.

Following the precepts laid down in the Meditation on Police Methods, our husband will have strictly forbidden his wife to receive visits from the celibate he suspects of making love to her, and of course she will have promised never to see him. These

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little domestic scenes we can safely leave to the imagination of the married; a husband will only have to return in thought to those days when sweet desire still melted his wife, and cleverly working on her confidence he could carry out what policy he liked. Let us take the bare facts of the situation; and to bring it home to you the better, let us suppose that you, Reader, are the husband. Your carefully organised Police Methods have brought to your knowledge that your wife, seizing the opportunity of a political dinner, to which very likely she procured your invitation, has made an appointment with Mr. A at your house that evening. The stage is now set for the finest peripetia. You time your return to co-incide with the arrival of Mr. A, or very nearly, for we do not advise you to risk a long delay before the rise of the curtain. But what shall be your manner on entering? the principals of the last Meditation will not apply now. Shall you come in raging then? still less that! Listen: you will enter all hurry and laughter, genially calling yourself fool to forget your purse, or your notes for the minister, or your handkerchief. You will surprise the two lovers together;—or it may be that your wife was warned of your approach by her maid, and has hidden the celibate. Let us deal with these two situations in turn.

By way of introduction we would remark, that every husband should be in a position, when desirable, to reproduce in his home the terror of the Second of September; he should be always preparing for this matrimonial date, from the moment his wife shows any of the First Symptoms. Thus he should take occasion, from time to time, to give his personal opinion on the conduct proper for a husband in the great crises of marriage. "For my part," you will say, "I should not hesitate to kill a man, that I found on his knees before my wife." In the course of a discussion, started casually by you some while back, you will rap out the opinion that the law should give a man, as in ancient Rome, power of life and death over his children, so that he can kill any bastard! These ferocious utterances will make a salutary impression on your wife. Sometimes you may deliver them with a half-laugh, pinching her ear and saying, "Oho! my little villain, wouldn't I chop your head off, just? Tell me, darling, would you like to be killed by me?" You give her the vision just the same; a woman cannot help fearing, that jests like this may turn to

Meditation XXII: Dramatic Effects

earnest. All her sex is fond of telling the truth under cover of a laugh, and so is quick to suspect the same device in a man; besides it will occur to her, that the more you love her the more likely you are to take a passionate revenge, in the heat of the moment. So when a man surprises his wife with a lover, it may be in the midst of a most innocent conversation, his head should produce the effect of the Gorgon's in mythology, though as yet he has been the death of none.

The peripetia suitable to this occasion will depend on the character of your wife; you can stage a pathetic scene like Diderot, or indulge in irony like Cicero, or snatch up a pistol and begin to load it,—you can even start firing it off, if you consider that a great noise is essential. On the other hand a clever husband may get his effect with a scene of moderation, working the more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger idea. He enters, sees the lover, halts before him and banishes the wretch with a look. Then he drops on his knees before his wife, and declaims a tragic speech: in which be sure to include this line, “Oh Caroline, my love! did I not love you enough, then?” Cue for tears! he weeps, she weeps, and this watery peripetia does the trick. We shall explain, in connexion with the second of our two situations, how it may be advisable for a husband to restrict the sentimentality of this scene, according to the degree of intellect represented by his wife. But let us proceed!

If it happen that the lover is hidden, the situation will be more difficult, but the peripetia all the more effective. Supposing the house to be arranged on the sacred principles of Meditation XIV., you will quickly discern the flattened form of the celibate, were he even curled up like Don Juan under a sofa cushion: to start with, you will recognise that certain articles are out of place, and this will give you a hint as to his hiding-place. If he has squeezed himself (by diabolic inspiration) into some incredible space,—and anything may be expected of a celibate,—watch your wife: she cannot help sometimes throwing a glance at the cabinet of mystery, and for the rest of the time will be looking in the exact opposite direction, so that it will only remain for you to set a simple mouse-trap.

The hiding-place located, you march straight up to it: you discover the lover! Now is the time to act handsomely. Tilt

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your chin up, to give yourself an air of dignified superiority; this attitude, maintained throughout, will add greatly to the effect you want to produce. The important thing at the moment is to annihilate the celibate with some pithy sarcasm, that you will have had plenty of time to improvise: having crushed him to the earth, you can then coldly point to the door. You will be extremely polite, but as cutting as the executioner's axe, and more relentless than the law. This icy scorn will be a peripetia in itself, and already will be taking effect on your wife's mind. There are to be no cries or gesticulations, no display of passion. As a young English author has said, men in high social spheres never make a fuss, like shop-keepers who cannot lose a fork without raising a hue and cry. When the celibate is gone and you are alone with your wife, you have a chance to re-conquer her for ever.

Placing yourself before her in an attitude of forced calm, suggestive of the deepest emotion, you will give her a selection from the following address, choosing such ideas as best accord with your general policy. "Madam! I shall not speak of your vows, or of my love: you have too much intelligence to be affected by, and I too much pride to inflict on you, the banal complaints, that are usual for husbands to make in these circumstances: such men only exhibit their weakness by standing on rights, however unquestionable. I shall show neither anger nor resentment, I hope. For it is not I who am outraged, I am not the man to care for the opinion of society: let those husbands dread ridicule who have merited it, as have the most of those whose wives deceive them. I can face it with a clear conscience: I love you as the first day I met you; nor have I ever failed, I will not say in my duties, for it has been no labour to devote myself to you, but in the fond attentions that are the expressions of a sincere love. You have all my confidence, you dispose of my fortune as you think best. This is the first time you have seen disapproval in my face, and now it is not severe. But if I frown to-day it needs no apology, seeing how sorely you have tried me; I may be expected to falter in my efforts for your happiness, when you show me that I am not destined to accomplish it. I will only ask you, as one friend to another, how you could risk ruining the lives of three beings at once: I mean the mother of my children, who will always be sacred to me, the head of this house, and lastly,

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the man you love. (She will throw herself at your feet perhaps: do not allow it, she is not worthy to take that position.) But you love me no longer, Eliza. No, my poor child! (The phrase 'my poor child' only to be used in cases where the crime has not been actually committed.) What use in pretending? You should have told me before! If love has ceased between husband and wife, does there not still remain friendship, mutual confidence? We are companions on the same road: is one never to stretch a hand to the other, throughout the long journey; am I never to save you from falling, or you me? But I have said too much, I shall wound your pride. . . Eliza! oh Eliza!"

Will you tell me, what the devil a woman can have to answer to that? The peripetia is overwhelming! Well, to a good six per cent. of women it is, who are such feeble creatures that the shock of this scene will keep them faithful to their husbands for ever, like scalded cats that are afraid even of cold water afterwards! To the others the scene will be beneficial at least as an alexipharmic or antidote; but as already hinted, the dose must be prepared to suit the case. There are some so weak in the intellect, that it will be enough to point at the lover's hiding-place, and say with a raising of the brows: "Mr. A is there! how can you endanger a man's life with your games? I am going out: get rid of him, and mind this does not happen again."

Only take care, for some women's hearts are so dilated by the shock of a peripetia, that an aneurism is the result; while others become seriously ill through curdling of the blood. Some even go mad; and cases are recorded of women poisoning themselves, or falling dead on the spot. . . You hardly desire the death of the sinner, we suppose? Nevertheless, the most beautiful and gallant of all the Queens of France, the unfortunate Mary Stuart, after seeing Rizzio killed almost in her arms, loved Bothwell and gave herself up as recklessly to that love: but she was a queen, and they have other natures than the common sort. Imagine that your wife, the woman whose portrait adorns our first Meditation, is a Mary Stuart in her own small way: then you need not hesitate to raise the curtain on your peripetia.

The signal that the time is ripe may be given in a hundred ways, in each of the hundred situations that may call for this stratagem. Othello recognised it in a handkerchief, Don Juan

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gave it in a pair of trousers, maybe your wife's error will be to whisper one night, "Alfonso darling!" instead of "Adolphus darling!" Here is a last example for you of a peripetia. A husband discovers that Madam has been running into debt; he goes to the shop known to give most credit, and addresses the proprietor as follows: "Mr. Josephs, you are a jeweller, and your passion for selling jewels is only equalled by your passion for being paid. Her Ladyship owes you thirty thousand francs: if you wish to be paid to-morrow (always go to the shop on the last day of the month), call on her at midday. I shall be present, and she will make signs to you not to mention the debt: disregard them, speak out boldly. I shall pay." In a word, the peripetia is in the science of marriage, what figures are in arithmetic.

All the principles of high conjugal philosophy, on which are based the means of defence given in the second part of our book, are in fact principles of nature; they are as it were quotations we have made from the great book of the world, and have the authority behind them of universal human sentiment. Just as fine minds divine instinctively the laws of taste, for which they would often be very puzzled to give reasons, so we have seen loving husbands instinctively applying, and with great success, the principles of marriage we have just developed, and all the while they had no conscious plan of action. An acute sense of their situation revealed to them, not the whole vast system, but such fragments as they required for their happiness: they were like the scientists of the sixteenth century, using microscopes not powerful enough to give them a sight of organisms, whose existence they divined by the light of genius.

We hope that our observations hitherto have been, and that those yet to follow will be, of a nature to destroy the idea, prevalent among men of frivolous mind, that marriage is a sinecure for the husband. In our view, a husband who finds life empty is not married at all; he is a heretic, having no conception of what conjugal life is, and therefore incapable of entering into it. Understood in this way, our meditations may open the eyes of many to a whole mysterious world, in the midst of which they have lived hitherto in blind ignorance of its beauties. Let us hope also that our methods, practised with discretion, will effect many conversions; then the blank page in our book, separating the second

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part from the *Civil War*, may stand for tears of joy, springing from repentant hearts. For we like to think, that of the half million respectable women, so carefully separated by us from the nation, not more than a fraction, say three-quarters at most, will be so perverse, so charming, so adorably bellicose, as to raise the standard of *Civil War*. And so—to arms, brothers! *To arms!*

THIRD PART :

Civil War

BEAUTIFUL AS KLOPSTOCK'S HEAVENLY VIRGINS, TERRIBLE AS
MILTON'S DEVILS.—*Diderot.*

Meditation XXIII: Manifestoes

MEDITATION XXIII: MANIFESTOES.

THE precepts with which our science can arm a husband at this stage are few in number; it is not so much a question of whether he will succumb or not, as of whether he can even put up a resistance. However, we shall hang up here some lanterns to light the arena in which the husband is about to appear, supported only by law and religion, against his wife with the whole of society on her side, and armed by nature with all the arts of deceit.

LXXXII. EVERYTHING IS TO BE HOPED, AND EVERYTHING TO BE FEARED, OF A WOMAN IN LOVE.

LXXXIII. THE DECEITFUL ACTS OF A WIFE WILL ALWAYS BE STUDIED, BUT NEVER REASONED.

LXXXIV. WOMEN PROCEED LIKE THE FLEA; BY JUMPS; FOR THERE IS NO CONTINUITY IN THEIR IDEAS, AND SOME ARE AS HIGH AS OTHERS ARE LOW. A WIFE'S SAFETY LIES IN THIS UNEXPECTEDNESS OF MOVEMENT; SHE HAS NOTHING TO FEAR FROM AN INTERRUPTION OF HER PLAN, SHOULD SHE HAVE ONE. BUT AS WOMEN ONLY MOVE WITHIN A SPACE CIRCUMSCRIBED BY THE MALE, IT WILL BE POSSIBLE FOR THE HUSBAND TO STOP THE JUMPING OF THIS INSECT, IF ONLY HE DO NOT LOSE IT IN HIS BED.

LXXXV. NEVER SCOLD YOUR WIFE, NEVER LET SO MUCH AS A WORD OF REPROACH PASS YOUR LIPS, *in presence of a third party*.

LXXXVI. WHEN A WOMAN DECIDES TO BREAK THE MARRIAGE VOW, EITHER SHE IS INDIFFERENT TO HER HUSBAND, AND SO HE COUNTS FOR NOTHING, OR VENGEANCE IS HER PURPOSE AND HE COUNTS FOR EVERYTHING. THAT IS A SAFE STARTING POINT FOR THE HUSBAND'S SPECULATIONS.

LXXXVII. A WOMAN MAY BE DOMINATED BY HER HEAD, HER HEART OR HER SEX; AND SO HER HUSBAND SHOULD BE ABLE TO TELL, IF HER INFIDELITY PROCEEDS FROM VANITY, FROM AFFECTION OR FROM SENSUALITY. THIS LAST IS A MALADY NOT INCURABLE, AFFECTION PRESENTS VERY LITTLE DIFFICULTIES, BUT OF VANITY THERE IS NO HOPE. A WOMAN DOMINATED BY HER HEAD IS THE MOST TERRIBLE

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OF SCOURGES. SHE COMBINES THE FAULTS OF THE SENSUAL AND OF THE SENTIMENTAL WOMAN, WITHOUT THE REDEEMING VIRTUES OF EITHER. SHE IS WITHOUT PITY, WITHOUT LOVE, WITHOUT VIRTUE, WITHOUT SEX.

LXXXVIII. THE SENTIMENTAL WOMAN WILL TRY TO INSPIRE HATRED IN HER HUSBAND; THE SENSUAL WOMAN, DISGUST; THE VAIN WOMAN, COLD INDIFFERENCE.

LXXXIX. A HUSBAND RISKS NOTHING IN PRETENDING TO BELIEVE IN HIS WIFE'S FIDELITY, ESPECIALLY IF HE PRESERVE A PATIENT SILENCE: WOMEN HATE AND DREAD SILENCE MORE THAN ANYTHING.

XC. TO PRETEND TO KNOWLEDGE OF A WIFE'S PASSION IS FOLLY: A HUSBAND WILL SHOW HIS INTELLIGENCE BY APPEARING IGNORANT, INDEED IT IS THE ONLY PART TO PLAY. HENCE THE SAYING, THAT IN FRANCE ALL THE MEN ARE INTELLIGENT.

XCI. RIDICULE IS TO BE AVOIDED AT ALL COSTS. "AT LEAST LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER IN PUBLIC!" SHOULD BE THE MOTTO OF EVERY MARRIAGE. TOO MUCH IS LOST, WHEN THE HUSBAND AND WIFE BOTH LOSE HONOUR, RESPECT, CONSIDERATION,—CALL THIS NAMELESS SOCIAL ASSET WHAT YOU LIKE.

These aphorisms still deal only with the strife, the catastrophe will have its own. This final approach to it we have called Civil War for two reasons: no war is so deadly, and no war is so polite. But where and how will it break out? Ha! do you suppose your wife will march at the head of an army, to the sound of drum and trumpet? She will have perhaps a single officer, no more: but this minute force will be enough to destroy your happiness in marriage. "You prevent me seeing the only people I like," is a Manifesto which has often served as the declaration of war. Vain, artificial women especially are fond of this formula, with all its appropriate variations. Morbid women will develop some chronic complaint, and have frequent death-bed scenes, till they obtain at least an unofficial divorce. But the most general Manifesto is the simple refusal met with in the marriage bed, that chief theatre of war. This subject will be treated more particularly in the Meditation entitled Various Weapons, in a section on modesty in relation to marriage.

In the end nearly all women owe their independence to a plan, which is unfailing in its effects on most husbands: it is

Meditation XXIII: Manifestoes

time this perfidy were exposed. But first we must remark, that one of the greatest of masculine fallacies is the widespread belief, that our honour and reputation depend on our own acts, that they are in fact the seal of approval set on conduct of ours by the public conscience: as a result of this belief, nearly every man in society is a slave to public opinion. Now the fact is, the conduct of a private man in France passes almost unnoticed, the world is much more inclined to take its opinion of him from his wife; on her it depends whether he will be held in honour, or become a subject for ridicule. Remember that when a woman wishes to give anyone a bad name, she has a wonderful talent for dressing up her spite in disinterested, or even friendly criticism; she will contrive to mention all his faults, under the pretext of defending them. And in the art of losing an argument she excels: she will meet proof with bold assertion, in the manner of one speaking only from a sentiment of loyalty, and will emphasise the hopelessness of her cause by making much of some trivial detail. Women understand one another perfectly; and when one has a weapon that it would not be becoming for her to use, she has only to hand it with a sweet smile to another. In this way they may ruin a husband, without having meant so much harm: they carelessly throw down a match, and soon after are appalled to see the blaze.

As a rule, all the wives will enter into league against a husband accused of tyranny; there is a secret bond between them, as between priests of the same religion. They hate one another, yet they protect one another. Were you the husband, you would not be able to win over more than one; and then, what capital your wife would make of this infidelity! and the seduction, what horror it would arouse in the others! You would then be formally put to the ban of the feminine empire; an irony would greet you in every smile, a double meaning in every answer. These lively creatures will forge a knife, and before gracefully plunging it into your heart, will amuse themselves by decorating the handle. The art of treacherous innuendoes or malicious silence, of the story mentioning no names, of the genial request before company for some impossibility, all are used against the husband who attempts to tyrannise his wife: the example is too dangerous to be tolerated,—might not his conduct become a model for all the husbands in his circle? So you are entertained to cups of poisoned

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honey; you may even receive serious lectures on marriage, or have to endure tedious banter on the duties of a gallant. Worse still, it will be the signal for a swarm of celibates to try all their wiles; in fact you will be attacked from every side, persecuted as a freak of nature, branded a tyrant or a pest, a monster to be generally distrusted.

All this time your wife will be defending you, as the bear was defended in La Fontaine's fable: she will throw paving stones at your head, to drive off the flies that settle on it. In the evening she will relate all that she has heard being said about you, and will ask you to explain actions and statements that you know nothing of; she will tell you how she has tried to excuse them, and how you must now allow her the liberty she had to boast of, in order to acquit you of charges of tyranny. Thus the wife of your bosom creates a gigantic rattle, which she is for ever shaking in your ears; its ceaseless din pursues you everywhere, deafening you and driving you to madness. Truly she has made you feel the thorns in the bed of roses! And in society she will be as charming to you as she is tormenting at home: who would think to see her greet you in a drawing-room, that she could ever sulk when you were gay, or plague you with her gaiety when you were sad? Yet so it will be at home, your two faces will present a perpetual antithesis.

Few men have the courage to stand their ground in face of this display, so well calculated are its nerve-racking effects: it is like the terrible *hourra*, given by the Cossacks before a charge. Some husbands fly into a fury, and put themselves in the wrong for ever; others desert their wives and the flag. Even the finer spirits sometimes fail to wave the magic wand, that alone can break these feminine spells. In two cases out of three, the wife wins her independence by this manœuvre, which is little more than a review of her forces; and so the war is soon over.

The husband of genius, who is able to keep his head amid the hostile clamour, can find much amusement in revealing to his wife her own secret motives; with good-humoured irony he can take her over the ground step by step, following all the intricacies of her labyrinthine mind. He can even tell her at every word that she is lying, if he can really feel affection for her the while, and make her feel that he cares more for her than for

Meditation XXIII: Manifestoes

the truth. Still war is war, and if a husband has not been shaken by the preliminary cannonade, a woman has plenty of other resources, as the following Meditations will disclose.

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MEDITATION XXIV: PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGY.

THE Archduke Charles composed a very fine work on the art of war, entitled "Principles of Strategy;" which was illustrated from the campaigns of 1796. But it seems to me rather like directions for writing poems already published: to-day we are much cleverer, we invent rules to suit each new work, instead of inventing a work to suit old rules. What did the ancient principles of military art avail against the impetuous genius of Napoleon? And if you were to found a system on the orders given by this great captain, what security have you that the future is not pregnant with a super-Napoleon? Books on the art of war, with few exceptions, share the fate of those on physical science: which not only have the progress of knowledge against them, but the secular changes of the earth itself . . . Alas! it is only too true of our own work also.

As long as we were dealing with a woman asleep and inert, nothing was easier than to spin the threads to ensnare her; but the moment she wakes up and begins to struggle, all becomes tangle and confusion. If a husband should think then to apply the principles of our second part, the net he threw over his wife would soon be torn: he would be like Wurmser and Mack and Beaulieu, executing their marches and counter-marches, unaware that Napoleon was shepherding them all the while, and that their elaborate combinations were only preparing their own destruction. Your wife in this case will be Napoleon.

The question is, how are you to know where you stand, when both of you are practising the same deceits, both setting the same mouse-traps; and whose will the victory be when you are both caught? "My angel, I have to go out," she says, "I must call on Mrs. So-and-so. I have ordered the carriage, will you come with me? Yes, be a dear and keep your wife company."

You think to yourself, "She will be nicely caught if I accept: she only asks, in order to be refused." And you answer, "Excellent! it happens that I have business with Mr. Somebody-else: he has been commissioned to take steps that may compromise

Meditation XXIV: Principles of Strategy

our interests, and it is essential that I have a word with him. After that I have to go to the Treasury: this will fit in admirably."

"How lucky!" she cries, "Go and dress now, darling, while Celia does my hair: and don't keep me waiting!"

In a few minutes you appear, shaved and dressed up, and call out cheerily, "Sweetheart, I'm ready!"

But all is changed now. A letter has come; or Madam is feeling unwell; or her dress did not fit, and she must send it to be altered; or she must wait for your son or your mother . . . You laugh to yourself of course! But don't forget this: the same comedy will be played, if it is you who are going out. Nine husbands out of ten go off happily, when their wives have seen them to the door: where should she be safe if not at home? Let them learn now, and be on their guard: from the day a wife realises that she has walked into a mouse-trap, or that she has been fooled by a peripetia, her ambition will be to turn those very weapons against her husband. She has nothing else to exercise her intelligence on, no pecuniary difficulties to trouble her: is it likely that she will meekly sit down and contemplate the unchanging panorama of her days? Your turn is coming to be trapped!

There is one man in society, the sight of whom irritates your wife extraordinarily; she cannot endure his style, his manners or his type of mind. Everything about him annoys her, she does not want to see or hear of the odious creature. Now who can he be? it would seem that she is just trying to spite you, for this is the friend you think most of; you admire his character, and feel that he appreciates yours,—your wife of course says, that your regard for him only comes from vanity. If you give a ball or a party, there is always a discussion about this person, Madam complaining that you force undesirable people upon her: "Well don't say I didn't warn you! That man will make trouble for you: trust a woman to read a man's character! Mark my words, this precious Baron, that you have lost your heart to, is a dangerous person; and you were a great fool ever to ask him to your house. I suppose you only did it, because you knew I couldn't bear the sight of him: you never remember to ask Mr. So-and-so, whom you know I enjoy meeting! It's just like you! Oh! I agree, your Baron makes himself pleasant, he's attentive and amusing and all that: but can't you see through it, my dear? Can't you see

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that he's not fit to be a friend of yours?" That will give you a rough idea of Madam's tactics; we cannot reproduce all the deceptive gestures and intonations, the looks that would make the fortune of an actress.

But this is obvious, you say; what husband would not have his suspicions aroused, and set a little mouse-trap? You would make *both* gentlemen free of your house, would you not; expecting to be given proof against Mr. So-and-so, the celibate whom Madam so likes to meet? Ha! you will have gone into a larger trap to set your own! I have often met in society young men like Mr. So-and-so, hopelessly in love with some married woman, who was just using them for a blind, was in fact applying a moxa to her husband, as in earlier days he had done to her. The poor innocents spend their time dutifully executing commissions, occasionally being allowed to ride beside the carriage of their mistress in the Bois. Gossip credits them with the possession of a woman, whose hand even they have not kissed; and their pride will not let them deny the flattering rumour. Like young priests saying white masses, they have the joy of figuring in love's procession, but only as supernumeraries. The husband on returning home will ask the concierge, "Have there been any visitors?" and the answer will be, "The Baron called to see you, sir, at two o'clock; but hearing Madam was alone he did not go up. Mr. So-and-so is with her now, sir." Entering the drawing-room, you behold a spruce young celibate, with scented handkerchief and marvellous cravat. He shows a great respect for you; while Madam seems to find a thrill in the sound of his footstep, and hangs on his every word. If you forbid her to see him, she begins to scream: it is only years afterwards (see the Meditation entitled Last Symptoms), that you realise how innocent was Mr. So-and-so, the culprit being Madam's pet aversion, the Baron!

One of the cleverest manoeuvres we ever heard of was the reverse of this last, the husband's very ingenuity being the means of his deception. A young wife, being possessed by an irresistible passion, which perhaps doubled her natural subtlety, actually gave visible signs of love for the man she loved, while expressing hatred for another she really cared nothing for! At first the husband, judging wrongly that he had to do with a woman more passionate than cunning, quite rightly believed that the case was as she

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presented it, in other words, that she loved the *sigisbeo* and hated the *patito*. It was then she took a daring step: she arranged to be found with the patito in a situation, which convinced both the husband and this hated young man, that her hatred was all a blind, and consequently that her genuine love for the other was part of the same pretence! To confirm her husband in this belief, she let a passionate letter fall into his hands, a letter to the man she hated of course, since she was only sincere in what she did openly! The situation was now ripe for a peripetia, and so one evening Madam threw herself at her husband's feet, watered them with her tears, and sobbed out a confession of her love for—the man she hated! “I honour and respect you enough,” she declaimed, “to confide in you before any one else. I love! that is my fault, and is it one to be easily overcome? The most I can do is to confess it to you, and to beseech you to protect me from myself: oh, save me from myself! Be a master to me, be severe! Tear me away from these surroundings, carry me as far as possible from the temptation; and console me with your strength. Some day perhaps I shall forget him: oh, if I could! My wish is not to be false to you; most humbly I ask your pardon for the thoughts of treachery, that love has put into my mind. What relief it is to confess that the love I showed for my cousin was a pretence, to draw your attention from a passion I could not master! It is true, I have feelings of friendship for my cousin, but as for love—oh, forgive my deceit! Alas! I can only love . . . (The name is lost in choking sobs.) Oh, let us go away somewhere! let us leave Paris!” Her hair was over her face, her dress in disorder; it was midnight . . . The husband forgave. Henceforth the cousin was a welcome guest in the house, and the Minotaur devoured one victim more.

What teaching could arm a husband against such arts? All the diplomacy of the Congress of Vienna is in their heads; they are as dangerous when they surrender as when they elude you. To follow a woman through the labyrinthine workings of her mind, a man must trust to the naked suppleness of his own, laying aside the power and authority of his sex; but how many husbands are great enough men for this? You must be ready to hunt with the hounds of deceit, in order to run down the truth; and the next day to hunt with truth, in order to run down a deceit.

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You must be ready to rush your artillery into line, and at the last moment perhaps to spike the cannon you were about to fire; to meet the enemy on a mountain top, and the same day again on the plain; to follow her in turns and twists, like a plover's tumbling in the air; to obey when it is expedient, and again to offer a timely resistance; to be able, like a musician running up his piano from the bottom note to the top with one sweep of his finger, to sound rapidly all the strings of a woman's mind, and pick out the secret motive of her acts; to receive her caresses with suspicion, looking rather for her thoughts than for your pleasure . . . All this is within the powers of a husband of genius, a man who can observe with imagination, and can express his mind in action: but such men are rare, too many husbands will be scared at the mere idea of studying a woman in this way. Yet these will take infinite trouble to become second-rate chess-players, or to acquire a local reputation for skill at billiards! Some of them will tell you, that it is impossible for them to be exerting their minds night and day, not to mention breaking all their habits: naturally, the wife triumphs. She realises that she has a superiority over her husband, both in energy and intellect; and even though this superiority be only temporary, it brings with it a feeling of contempt for the head of the house. The reason why so many men are not masters in their own home is largely lack of talent, but still more is it lack of the will to make an effort.

As to those who face the stress and strain of this duel, embracing a period of hardship for sake of lasting happiness, they need great moral strength. Often when the time comes for a strategic move, it is impossible to locate the enemy's position: for once these Satanic creatures really exert their powers of dissimulation, their faces are as baffling as darkness itself. Here is a story that will serve as illustration.

A very young, very pretty and very witty person, one of the light-o'-loves of Paris, was still in bed one morning; while sitting on the bed was one of her most favoured protectors. A note arrived from another, a very passionate gentleman, to whom she allowed the right of speaking as if she belonged to him: it amused her, and perhaps she enjoyed it too. The note was scribbled in pencil, as follows: "I hear that Mr. C is with you now. I am waiting to blow his brains out." Mme. D. calmly continued

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her conversation with Mr. C., asking him in the course of it to give her a little writing-case of red morocco, which he brought to her. "Thank you, dear," she said; "Go on talking, I shall hear what you say." And without any interruption of the conversation, she wrote the following note: "If you are jealous of C., you can blow out one another's brains at your leisure, that is, if one of you has any to be blown out." Then looking up she said, "My dear, light this candle, will you, and give me the sealing-wax. That's it: you're adorable! Now do you mind leaving me to get up? and please give this note to Mr. H., who is waiting for it at the door." All was said with inimitable coolness; there was never a change in her voice, not so much as a twitch of an eyelash. The audacious conception was crowned with complete success: Mr. H. simply forgot his wrath, at seeing Mr. C. the bearer of the answer; indeed his chief trouble was to refrain from laughing.

But the more torches one throws into the abyss of the female mind, the more profound it seems to be: it is truly bottomless. We hope now to make this Meditation at once more agreeable and more instructive by exhibiting the principles of strategy in actual practise, and that in an epoch when woman had attained to a high degree of vicious perfection. An example suggests more maxims, reveals more resources, than all the theorising in the world.

Towards the end of a dinner given to some friends by Prince Lebrun, when the guests were enlivened by the champagne, the conversation turned on the inexhaustible topic of woman's wiles; the starting-point being a story current at the time about Countess R. and a necklace. A scientist of high repute, and much in favour with the Emperor, vigorously maintained the not very vigorous opinion, that it is not in the nature of things for a man to combat successfully the deceitful arts of a woman. "As it happens, I have had proof," he said, "that nothing is sacred to them."

There were loud protests from the ladies; amid which he repeated, raising his voice, "I can give you an instance!"

"It was an exception!" they cried.

"Let us hear the story!" cried one of the younger ladies, and several of the company echoed, "Yes, do tell it!"

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The old man took a prudent glance round the table, and having estimated the ages of the ladies, he said with a smile: "Well, as we have all had some experience of life, I don't mind telling you the story." There was an expectant silence, and the cynic began to read from the book of his memories.

At the age of twenty I fell desperately in love with a Countess; I was very innocent, and she deceived me. I protested angrily, and she told me to go. But I had learnt nothing, and soon I made new advances: I was only twenty, and she forgave me. I was still innocent and still deceived, but not being repulsed again, I was the happiest of men, believing that no lover was more truly loved. The Countess was a friend of Mme. de T., who sometimes seemed to me to have designs on my person, though she never forgot her dignity: she was a lady of great propriety. But one evening, as I was waiting vainly for the Countess in her box at the theatre, I heard myself addressed by name from the next box; it was Mme. de T.: "You seem to have come too early!" she said, "was it fidelity or—interest in the opera? Here! why not come and join me?" There was witchery in her voice and manner, but I had no expectations of a romance, as I left my box for hers. "You've no plans for this evening, have you?" she said to me in a minute or two, and while I hesitated, went on gaily, "Don't have any! If I save you from the tedium of solitude, you must devote yourself to me. No questions, simple obedience! Call my footman, please." I found myself involuntarily obeying; I went downstairs and fetched the man. "Go to this gentleman's house," she said to him, "and say that he will not be home tonight." Then signing to him to come nearer, she whispered something in his ear, and he departed. The opera began. I ventured a remark, but was not encouraged; we listened to the music, or pretended to listen. At the end of the first act the footman returned with a note, and informed Madam that everything was ready. She gave me a smile, and we got up to go; taking my arm she led me to her carriage, and soon I was on a high road leading out of town, without having been told a word as to our destination, my questions always being greeted with a merry laugh.

If I had not known that the lady had a great passion for the Marquis of V., of which she could not suppose me to be

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ignorant, I should have thought myself in luck's way. But anyhow, if there hadn't been the Marquis, she knew my own devotion to the Countess . . . No, I must suppress the flattering hope, and wait for another explanation. At the first stage our horses were changed with unusual rapidity: the joke was beginning to look serious, and I insisted on knowing where she was taking me.

"Where?" she said gaily, "to the most beautiful spot in the world! I'll give you twenty guesses: ha! don't waste your breath, you wouldn't guess in a hundred! we're going to my husband's place! Do you know him?"

"Never seen him in my life!"

"So much the better! I was afraid you might have met. But I hope you will like him: we are having a reconciliation, for the last month we have been writing. Don't you think it was nice of me to bring you?"

"Very! But I should like to know what I am to do: how can I help in the reconciliation?"

"Ah! leave that to me! I wanted someone young and unspoilt; besides I like you, and you'll make the interview less tiresome."

"But the day, or rather the night of a reconciliation seems an odd time to choose, to introduce me to your husband! A first meeting is apt to be embarrassing enough anyhow! what shall we look like, the three of us? I must say, I'm not attracted by the idea!"

"I have brought you to amuse me!" she replied imperiously, "so please don't preach!"

When she showed herself so decided, I felt that there was nothing to do but to accept the situation. I began to laugh over the part I had to play, and we both became very merry. We had changed horses again. The mysterious lamp of night was illumining a sky of passionate purity, and flooding the world with silvery allurements of a day in night. I was called on to admire, now the beauty of the moonlit landscape, now the perfect calm pervading all nature. After a while my companion mentioned that we had not much farther to go: I thought she might have said, "We shall not be much longer alone together." Naturally we leant out of the same window, when there was some beauty either had to show the other, and sometimes our faces touched.

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Once when there came an unexpected jolt she clutched my hand; and soon after,—how it came about I don't know, for it was not a very big stone we went over,—I found myself holding Mme. de T. in my arms. We were still supposed to be admiring the scene, but my head was swimming, and for all the brightness of the moon, passing objects seemed to become strangely jumbled: suddenly Madam broke away from me, and fell back into the further corner of the carriage. There was silence for some minutes, then she said to me, "Do you wish to convince me of the imprudence of what I am doing?"

Judge of my embarrassment! "Do I wish?" I cried; "as if I could have any designs, that you would not be aware of as soon as I!" A pure accident, Madam; I was taken by surprise, and that is surely pardonable?"

"Yes, and you took advantage of the fact, it seems."

The argument was cut short by our arrival; we heard the rattle of wheels on cobble-stones, and saw that we were in the court-yard of a castle. As the carriage drew up at the door, I saw that the rooms were all lit up as if for a festival; everything bespoke pleasure except the face of the host, which at sight of me became clouded, to say the least. M. de T. came to the carriage door, and welcomed his wife with a show of tenderness, rather suggesting a part rehearsed for the occasion: I learned later that the reconciliation was necessitated by family reasons. I was presented, and the master of the house saluted me casually. He gave his arm to his wife, and I followed the couple into the house, meditating on my part in this midnight comedy: visions passed through my mind of myself in many situations, and I wondered if in the future there would be any to compare with this. The rooms were magnificently furnished and decorated; the husband had drawn on all the resources of luxury, trying by voluptuous surroundings to stimulate his failing passions. Not knowing what to talk about, I took refuge in admiration. The goddess of the temple, well accustomed to do the honours, received my compliments with an easy grace. "But this is nothing!" she said, "I must show you my husband's rooms."

"I had them dismantled five years ago," he put in, and she laughed gaily. At supper she offered him some Rouen veal, and

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when he replied, "I have been on milk for the last three years," she laughed gaily again. Can you imagine a stranger assemblage than us three? The husband eyed me with a haughty aloofness, and I paid him back with a look of audacity. But if I was accepted as a necessary evil on one side, on the other I came in for charming smiles: this was Madam's reply to the attack. It was certainly the most fantastic supper-party, at which I have ever been present! When we rose from the table, I supposed it would be to retire for the night: but my supposition was only correct for our host. On entering the drawing-room, he said to his wife: "I am glad you had the forethought to bring this gentleman; you expected that I was not to be relied on for sitting up late, and you were quite right: I must leave you now." Then turning to me, he said with unconcealed irony, "I must ask you to pardon me, Sir, and to be so good as to obtain for me my wife's pardon." So saying, he left us. My thoughts? I had thoughts enough in that minute for a whole year! Now that we were alone together, we looked at one another a little awkwardly, Mme. de T. and I; and by way of a distraction, she proposed a stroll on the terrace, adding casually, "until the servants have finished their supper."

The night was superb. One saw rather suggestions of things than the things themselves, as if they had been veiled to give greater freedom to the imagination. The gardens were situated on the lower slope of a hill, and went down by terraces to the brink of the Seine, seeming to embrace its serpentine's curves, as if they would win from the river its picturesque islets. By such accidents of nature many perfect pictures were produced, to add to the treasures of this paradise. What a relief to be out here in the moonlight, after the petty scene of conjugal strife! We were walking on a long terrace, on which the shadows of great trees made lively patterns, sharper than the day: gradually our talk became more confidential, my charming companion seeming to feel a need to pour out her soul. At first she had taken my arm; but insensibly mine had slipped round her body, and now it seemed that I was bearing most of her weight on it. The position was pleasant but tiring after a time; and as a grassy bank offered itself, we sat down without drawing apart, for we had still much to tell one another. As we talked of the joy and consolation to be found in mutual confidence, she said to me, "Yes, and who

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can enjoy it better than we two, between whom there is so little need for reserve? I cannot mistrust you, knowing as I do the bond which holds my friend and you to one another." Perhaps she wished to be contradicted, but I let it pass. And so we persuaded ourselves that we were no more than two simple friends. "I was afraid," I said, "that the accident in the carriage might have alarmed you."

"Oh! I'm not so easily frightened!"

"All the same, I feel it has cast a shadow over our relations."

"What can I do to re-assure you?" she asked.

"Give me voluntarily the kiss, that chance..."

"Certainly I will, otherwise you might be vain enough to think that I am afraid of you!"

I had the kiss... It is with kisses as with confidences, one leads to another: their repetition interrupted the conversation, soon they replaced it; there was hardly a space for sighs to escape. Then we sat in silence, a silence that could be heard. We got up without a word more said, and resumed our walk. "We ought to go in," she said presently, "there is a cold air off the river, that isn't healthy."

"I think there is little danger in it for us," I answered.

"Perhaps so; all the same, let us go in!"

"You're afraid this walk may not easily be forgotten by me? I see! your concern is for me!"

"You are modest," she said with a laugh, "and you credit me with singular consideration!"

"Well, if you think there is danger for you too, by all means let us go in; come, I insist!" It was an artificial conversation, such as must serve when two beings have to speak anything but their thoughts.

She took me at my word, and we started back along the path to the house. I do not know, at least I did not know then, whether she was following her humour all the time, or whether she was acting from motives of prudence, and was as sorry as I to bring down the curtain on so pretty a scene: it might be, I thought, that she was carrying out some plan for her own amusement, and that this required a change of scene now. Yes! it was not her present humour to go in, she evidently shared my regret, for as by tacit consent our steps began to drag; and strange as it may

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seem, while a sadness fell on us at the thought of parting, we seemed inclined to quarrel with one another: the fact is, we did not know on whom or on what to lay the blame. We were full of pent-up passion, to which a quarrel would have given some sort of outlet; but we had nothing to reproach one another with, no rights to demand angrily. All the time we were drawing nearer to the house, yet neither could think of an excuse to avoid this duty, which our own mismanagement had imposed on us. At the door Mme. de T. turned round, to take a last look at the moonlit garden: "I am not pleased with you!" she said to me; "After all my confidences you have given me none; you have not said a word about the Countess. And what is sweeter than to talk of a loved one? I should have listened with such sympathy, too: that would have been the least I could do, after depriving you of her company tonight."

To which I replied, "Have I not the same reproach to make to you? Instead of giving me the history of this reconciliation, in which my part is somewhat comical, you might have talked to me about the Marquis . . ."

"Pardon my interrupting!" she said; "little experience as you have had of women, you ought to know that their confidences are to be waited for. Let us return to you: are you happy with my friend? Alas! I fear the contrary . . ."

"Why believe the stories, which it amuses society to spread?"

"Save yourself the trouble of pretending! The Countess is less mysterious than you are; women of her temper are liberal of the secrets of love, are little concerned to shelter their adorers, especially when a figure like yours gives them a chance to steal a triumph. Not that I would accuse her of coquetry, far from it: but a prude has her vanity as well as a coquet . . . Come, tell me frankly: does she give you nothing to complain of?"

"Really, Madam, you shouldn't stand here, the air is icy! Didn't you wish to go in?"

"You find it so? how odd! the air seems to me quite warm."

Somehow she had taken my arm again, and we began to wander away from the door, without my noticing which direction we took. My heart was beating strangely: what she had said,

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or rather had not said, of the man I knew to be her lover; the mysterious drive, and the scene in the carriage; the scene on the grassy bank, the hour, the half-light,—all contributed to excite me. I was torn between desire and a sense of my own dignity; trying to reason out my situation, I was baffled by the depth of my own feelings. Such was my state of mind, while she continued to talk of the Countess: I was unable to speak, and my silence seemed to confirm whatever she chose to say. However, some of her remarks roused me, and gradually the spell was broken. It was a rapid character-sketch after this style.

“How fine she is! what natural grace! Disloyalty in her mouth has the character of wit defying superstition, deceit the character of a noble sacrifice, in the cause of decency! Rarely tender, never sincere, yet always charming; lover of pleasure, cultivating prudery; lively, cautious, clever, vain; a Proteus for shapes, a Grace for manners; she lures and she eludes. What parts I have seen her play! What dupes—but this is between you and me—what dupes surround her! how she has fooled the Baron, what tricks she has played on the Marquis! When she took you, it was to distract the rivals: they were on the point of an outburst, for she had managed them so much that they began to see through it. So she brought you on the scene, gave them you to think about instead of one another, it was a new occupation for their minds: at the same time she had to keep you dangling nicely, one day driving you to despair, consoling you the next, and so on. Ah! that’s when a clever woman is happy, when she is making everyone around her feel, without feeling anything herself! Yet I wonder, is she as happy as she thinks she is?”

This last sentence, accompanied as it was by a meaning sigh, was the masterpiece. I felt a bandage fall from my eyes, without seeing that another was being tied across them. My absent mistress seemed to me the most false of women, and beside me I believed I had the truest and tenderest. I sighed in turn, sending forth my heart into the air, to mingle perchance with hers . . . My companion blamed herself for having distressed me; she was wrong, she said, to become so absorbed in a description, however true: and this one was bound to be suspect, as coming from another woman. I answered vaguely, for I took in little of what she was saying to me now; I only know that we were on the high road of

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love, but had started again so far back, that the end of the journey was as uncertain as ever. It happened that the road we had taken through the garden led to a summer-house, which was now pointed out to me among the trees: it looked a very temple of romance. My companion told me how it was fitted up inside, and lamented that she had not the key: but on reaching it we found it open. In day-light we should have seen more of its design, but the moon threw over it a glamour that no architect could produce: we trembled as we entered; truly it was a sanctuary, was it to be love's? We crossed the floor and sat together on a couch, listening to the beating of our two hearts. If I was restrained by any scruples, a moon-beam striking on the opposite wall, as the maddening planet came into view of our window, swept them away . . . She thrust me back, and her hand felt the beating of my heart: she would have fled, but fell back on to the couch, unable to be angry or afraid. Thus we sat awhile, in silent conversation, for the sweet language of thought was given to us. Mme. de T., now yielding to my embrace, hid her head in my bosom, sighed and grew calm beneath my kisses; love had distressed her, and she came to love for consolation. The only sound was the murmur of the river below, in which we seemed to hear the flowing of our two lives in one stream. In the gloom of the pavilion one could scarce distinguish objects, yet a light of beauty seemed to shine out of the face I looked down into, a dim splendour worthy of the queen of these fairy haunts. "What power of resistance has one in this enchanted place?" I heard her say in a tremulous voice; "come, let us flee the danger!" She rose and drew me with her; and so regretfully we took the path from the summer-house. "Ah, how happy she should be!" on a sigh the words seemed to leave her.

"Who?" I asked, bewildered.

Mme. de T. drew in her breath sharply, and said as if to herself, "My God! what have I said?" We had reached the grassy bank, and involuntarily we stopped. "How far away the summer-house seems already!" she said. By a sort of magic our mood seemed to change, the conversation became less romantic; we even had the profanity to talk jestingly of love. We reduced it to its simplest terms, considered it apart from any question of morals, and proved that its favours were only a pleasure the same

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as any other; philosophically speaking, there was nothing binding in them, unless we chose to take the public into our confidence, or were indiscreet enough to let it discover our secret. "What luck to have hit on such a lovely night!" she said; "well, if we separate tomorrow, as we may have to, nature will not try to enforce any contract; she will give us a few regrets perhaps, but a happy memory for compensation. If only all laws were like nature's! see how easily we come to this agreement, without any of the delays, any of the vexation or the tyranny of proceedings in court! Oh shame! what shall I be saying next? After all my delicacy and battling with temptation, here am I embracing the boldest doctrines, preaching love of liberty, which is the next step to liberty of love! Really, our minds are like machines, the way they go round. Now I am falling again under the spell of all this beauty, am possessed by the romance of this moonlit garden . . . Oh, never let us forget the summer-house! Do you know," she said smiling, "there is a chamber in the castle, that is even lovelier! But one can show you nothing, you always want to touch like a child, and you break whatever you touch." My curiosity was aroused, and I protested that I would be good: but she changed the subject. "This night," she said, "would be without flaw for me, if I were not vexed with myself for what I said about the Countess. I have nothing to complain of in you: I was a novelty and you were attracted, even felt deeply, as I like to believe. I ought to have been firmer, but these surroundings have a power over me . . . By the way, how do you like my husband?"

"Little enough! but it was hardly to be expected that he would be pleasant to *me*."

"That is the worst of marriage, he could not look at you disinterestedly: probably he will suspect our friendship."

"He does already, of course!"

"Well, admit that he has reason! You must not make a long stay with us, it would upset him: remember his manner, as he left us for the night. As soon as any visitors come, and they will come," she added with a provoking smile, "say goodbye. Anyhow you have an affair of your own to watch over!" What did it all mean? It occurred to me, this night's adventure might be a trap, contrived by some rival for the love of the Countess.

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Seeing the cloud on my face, Mme. de T. added these seductive hints: "Oh! my husband was a gayer man when he furnished that chamber I spoke of! It was in preparation for our marriage, the little shrine led out of my bed-room: alas! he had need of artificial means to stimulate his passion."

"How good it would be," I cried, "to avenge in that place your slighted charms, to restore to them their rights!"

She was not offended by the sentiment; she just answered teasingly, "You promised to be good!"

We entered the house, and she took me to the secret citadel of love. I draw a veil over pleasures, that age has ever pardoned in youth, for sake of its own sweet memories; often too for sake of its own frustrated desires, that seem to be avenged in the happy loves of the next generation. In the morning Mme. de T., more beautiful than ever as she half opened her liquid eyes, put her hand behind my head and asked me: "Well! will you ever love the Countess as much as me?"

I was about to answer, when a trusted maid came in, whispering excitedly, "Go, go! it is broad day, it is eleven o'clock, and the master is stirring!" It was like the end of a dream: after throwing on my clothes I found myself wandering down a passage, vaguely wondering how I was to find a room that I had never seen. A mistake might be fatal! It occurred to me that it would be a natural thing to take a morning walk, so I slipped out of the house. The keen air soon brought me to my senses; instead of an enchanted world, I became aware of a very real one. As my mind cleared, I began to review my situation calmly. In spite of my danger, the most pressing question was, what did my enchantress mean by the favour accorded me, what was I to her? I had believed her to love the Marquis passionately, to have loved him for two years: had she broken with him? Above all, was I chosen as his successor, or merely as a means to punish him? What a night! what an adventure altogether! Was there ever such a delicious woman? I was drifting again upon enchanted seas, when I heard a footstep near me: I looked up, I rubbed my eyes, I could not believe it! Guess whom I saw: the Marquis!

"You hardly expected me so soon?" he cried genially: "well, how did it go off?"

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I gasped for breath! "Then you knew I was here?" I asked feebly.

"Why, yes! the footman brought me word that you were starting. Did you play your part well? I wish I could have seen the husband's face, when you stepped out of the carriage! His wife to bring her lover with her to the reconciliation! Does he hate you like hell? You are packed off this morning, I suppose? All right, I have provided for that; there is a carriage here at your service. Not a word! the revenge you have given me will pay for more than that; I am much in your debt, my friend, for such a service."

These last words gave me the clue to the mystery, I saw the part I had to play. "But why do you come so soon?" I said, "wouldn't it have been wiser to wait a day or two?"

Everything has been thought out; I am supposed to be staying in the neighbourhood, and to have taken the opportunity to run over. But didn't Mme. de T. let you into the whole secret? I blame her for the lack of confidence, after all you have done for us!"

"You mustn't, my dear fellow: perhaps she had her reasons. I might not have played my part so well!"

"Did you enjoy the joke? Tell me all that happened, yes, do tell me!"

"Well you see, I didn't realise quite what a good joke it was; for although Madam gave me a part to play . . ."

"Ah! it was not a good part."

"Don't you believe it! there are no bad parts for good actors."

"I see! you got through it well enough!"

"Marvellously."

"And what do you think of Madam de T.?"

"Adorable!"

"It was something, don't you think, to secure that woman?" as he said this, he paused to give me a look of triumph. "The trouble she gave me! Well, I think I can say of her now, as a result of my management, that no one in Paris has a mistress whose fidelity he can more surely count on."

"At least you have succeeded in . . ."

"Oh, it's a talent with me! I saw that all her frivolity only proceeded from a disordered imagination, so I set myself to obtain

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a mastery over her mind: you can have no idea how attached to me she is now. And there is no denying she is charming, is there ? ”

“ With that I entirely agree ! ”

“ Between ourselves, she has only one fault that I know of. Nature gave her everything else, but withheld the divine flame of passion, which sets a crown on all her gifts: my mistress can awaken it in another, there is no sensation she cannot give, but herself she feels nothing; she is marble ! ”

“ I must take your word for it,” I answered, “ for of course I have had no means of judging. I declare, you know this woman as if you were her husband; you somehow look like one too! If I hadn’t dined last night with M. de T., I should take you for . . . ”

“ Tell me, was he a good host ? ”

“ Oh! I was received like a dog ! ”

“ Excellent! Come, let us go in and pay our respects to Madam: you ought to say good-morning to her, you know ! ”

“ Wait! wouldn’t it be more decent to begin with the husband ? ”

“ Perhaps you’re right,” he said; “ But let us go to *your* room first, my wig wants a little powder. Say! he really took you for a lover ? ”

“ You can judge of that in a minute by his greeting: let us go straight to him.” I wanted to avoid taking him to a room, whose whereabouts I had no notion of: but just then it was shown to me by chance. Through an open door I saw the valet, who had been appointed to wait on me, sleeping in an arm-chair, with a guttering candle beside him. He sprang up as we entered, and in a stupefied state presented a dressing-gown to the Marquis. I was on tenterhooks; but the Marquis was too self-satisfied to be suspicious, and only found a subject for laughter in the sleepy servant. We passed on to the old gentleman’s rooms. There is no need to tell how he greeted me, or how it contrasted with the welcome given to the Marquis, the compliments paid to him and the pressing invitations to stay: M. de T. insisted on conducting him to Madam’s room, in the hope that she would persuade him. As for me, our host would have liked, he said, to extend the same invitation to me, but he had heard I suffered from a weak chest, and the damp air of the river would be fatal to me; after one night only at the castle, he noticed I looked some-

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what exhausted. The Marquis repeated his offer of the carriage, and of course I accepted: the husband was overjoyed, in fact we were all pleased with ourselves. But I was determined to see Mme. de T. again before I left; every minute I became more and more impatient. By the way, my friend seemed to think it quite natural that his mistress should still be sleeping at this hour; his satisfaction was boundless, and he could not refrain from whispering to me, as we followed the husband to her room: "Isn't he admirable? he couldn't have responded better, if we had supplied him with the words! Ah! he's a good old fellow: I am not sorry they have come to an agreement, it will be a pleasant house to visit. You will agree, that he couldn't choose a better lady to do the honours?"

"Indeed he could not," I answered with enthusiasm.

"But I needn't remind you," he said mysteriously, "good as the joke has been, mum's the word! Oh, I know we can trust you! I'll satisfy Mme. de T., that her secret is in safe hands."

"There is no need, I think; see how soundly she sleeps. Even you can hardly satisfy her better than I have done."

"Ha! ha! I can well believe, you have not an equal for putting a woman to sleep!"

"No, nor a husband, nor if necessary, dear boy, a lover!"

At last M. de T. gained admittance to his wife's room: and it was a dramatic situation, as we all assembled there. When she had an opportunity to speak to me apart, Madam said to me, "I was afraid to go to sleep, lest you should be gone when I awoke; I am pleased that you knew this would have grieved me." What matter if she was heard? it would only be keeping up the comedy!

"Madam," said I, "I wish you goodbye." It was my voice that spoke to her, she did not miss the note of emotion in it. At our entering she had looked anxiously from me to the Marquis; but her lover's satisfied air, and his foxy smile, soon re-assured her. She laughed at him secretly with me, just enough to console me without cheapening herself in my eyes.

"He played his part well," said the Marquis to her in a low voice, placing a hand on my shoulder, "he can count on my gratitude . . ."

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"You need say no more about that!" said Mme. de T., "I know all I owe to this gentleman."

To sum all up, the husband sneered at me, the lover patronised me, and I had paid them both out. How I admired the lady, who could thus play with us all three, without losing anything of her dignity! After a few minutes of this scene in the bed-room, I felt that the time had come for me to depart; but when I had taken my leave of the company, and was outside the door, Mme. de T. followed me out to the landing, on the pretence of giving me a commission to do. "Goodbye, my friend!" she said, "You have given me a very great pleasure, and I have given you in return a beautiful dream for ever." With an indescribable look, at once gay and profound, she added; "Goodbye, and for ever, you have plucked a solitary flower, a wayside bloom that no other man . . ." She stopped, and put her thought into a sigh; but immediately her lively spirit was on the wing again, and with a teasing smile she said: "The Countess loves you: if I send you back to her less adoring, you can love her now with more understanding. Goodbye again, and do not make trouble for me with my friend." So saying, she pressed my hand and left me.

More than once those of the ladies, who had not brought their fans with them to the table, had to blush as they listened to the old man: whose charming manner of narration won grace for certain details, that we have suppressed as too erotic for modern taste. We must believe that all the ladies complimented him, both on the experience and on the account he gave of it; for not long after he had the charming story printed by Pierre Didot, in an edition of twenty-five copies, one of which he presented to each of the guests at this dinner, men and women alike. It was from the copy numbered 24, that we took the elements of the story for reproduction here: we may add that its publication was suggested to us, strangely enough, by Dorat, who pointed out the high lessons for husbands embodied in it, as well as the delightful picture it offers to celibates of the manners of the last century.

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MEDITATION XXV: ALLIES OF THE ENEMY.

OF all the evils Civil War brings into a country, the worst is the appeal that one or other of the parties makes sooner or later to the foreigner. Unhappily we have to confess, that women are the worst offenders in this respect, for they never take the field without a foreign army: what else is the lover? he can hardly be called one of the family, unless he is brought in under the ambiguous title of cousin. The purpose of this Meditation is to examine all the assistance, that a wife can find in the external powers governing human life; or rather, what devices she will employ to arm them against you her husband.

Two beings united by marriage are subject to the influence of religion on the one hand, and of society on the other. Under the head of religion we include medicine, as both the doctor and the priest administer to the private needs of the individual; and the same may be said of servants. Under the head of society we include your wife's relations and friends, also friends of the lover. Each of our two categories being thus subdivided into three, we shall present this important Meditation in six sections, under the following titles:

1 RELIGION AND THE CONFESSIONAL, IN RELATION TO MARRIAGE;

2 THE MOTHER-IN-LAW;

3 MADAM'S SCHOOL-FRIENDS, AND OTHER INTIMATES;

4 FRIENDS OF THE LOVER;

5 THE LADY'S-MAID;

6 THE DOCTOR.

1 RELIGION AND THE CONFESSIONAL.

"It is too much when a husband has both gallantry and piety against him: a wife should make a choice." That was a witty saying of La Bruyère's, but we cannot agree with him.

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There is a story as to the Confessional*. . . . Well, perhaps better not !

2 THE MOTHER-IN-LAW.

Up to the age of thirty a woman's face is a book written in a foreign language, which however it is possible to translate, in spite of the difficult *gynecisms* of the idiom; but after forty a woman becomes a mystic script, undecipherable to the best of scholars: no one can read an old woman, unless it were another old woman. Some diplomats, when thwarted by dowagers, have formed the diabolical plan of winning their love: but if they succeeded, it involved enormous sacrifices; and we would hardly recommend you to use the receipt with your mother-in-law. She is certain to be your wife's aide-de-camp, for if a mother were not on the side of her daughter, it would be a monstrosity; yes, unhappily for husbands, an almost unheard of thing. Of course if your mother-in-law lives in the provinces and you in Paris, or vice-versa, the difficulty solves itself: but that is a piece of good fortune very rare.

Plenty of husbands have for mother-in-law a well-preserved woman, and such a one can be kept in check for a good while, providing some enterprising young celibate is available. But generally it should not be necessary to resort to this means: if a husband has any conjugal genius, he ought to be able to pit his own mother against his wife's so that these two forces neutralise one another. Or he may embroil his wife and her mother! There are many ways of doing this; but to put a fine finish on the work, you must have the metallic heart of a Richelieu, who could embroil even a mother and son. Well a jealous husband, as a rule, is not encumbered by many scruples; I doubt if the man who forbade his wife to pray to any but the female saints, putting the Holy Apostles on the Index, would think any measure extreme.

Many husbands make it a rule to be always on such bad terms with the mother-in-law, that it is almost impossible for her

* In the original there follow two pages in cipher, which have never been decoded: the translator might have devoted his life to the task, had he not been assured by the best authorities, both on cipher and on Balzac, that the passage is only a practical joke of the author's, concealing no story on this tantalising subject.

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to visit her daughter: this would be a good policy enough, did it not have the effect sooner or later of strengthening the bonds of kinship between the two thus harshly separated.

Well, those are about all the means you have of combating the maternal influence. As to the nature of that influence, and the assistance that may be rendered by the mother-in-law, all we can say is that the services are infinite, and none the less dangerous because often negative; we can give no details, for all here is wrapped in a secrecy that no science can penetrate. And even if any could, such a variety of manœuvres would be revealed, as could no more be named and classified than can the circumstances of every-day life. Let the student only inscribe, among the salutary precepts of this conjugal gospel, the following two maxims.

(a) NEVER ALLOW YOUR WIFE TO VISIT HER MOTHER ALONE.

(b) IF YOUR MOTHER-IN-LAW CULTIVATES THE SOCIETY OF ANY CELIBATES UNDER FORTY YEARS OF AGE, INVESTIGATE THE REASONS IN EVERY CASE; FOR A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN ALWAYS HAS A WEAKNESS FOR HER DAUGHTER'S LOVER.

3 MADAM'S SCHOOL-FRIENDS AND OTHER INTIMATES.

Louise de L., daughter of an officer killed at Wagram, had been taken under his special protection by Napoleon. When she left the college of Écouen, already mentioned, it was to marry Baron de V., a very rich commissary-general; Louise being then eighteen years old, and the Baron forty. Her features were not remarkable, nor could her complexion be praised for its clearness; but she had a good figure, pretty hands and feet, an intelligent expression and some taste for the arts. The Baron was exhausted by the fatigues of war, not to mention the excesses of his amorous youth. He had lived through stormy times; in his face you seemed to see the stamp of the Republic, of the Directorate, of the Consulate and of the Empire, one on top of the other.

He became so fond of his young wife, that he begged the Emperor to give him a post in Paris, that he might be able to watch over his treasure; and as the husband of Louise, he obtained his request. He was as jealous as Count Almaviva, but there

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was as much vanity as love in it. The young orphan had married from necessity, but it flattered her to find what an empire she had over a man so much her senior; she came to expect all the little cares and attentions, which at first had somewhat bewildered her. At the same time her delicacy was offended by many of the habits and expressions of a husband, whose manners had a strong savour of republican license: in a word, the man was a predestinate.

I cannot say exactly how long the Baron made his honey-moon last, or how long was the succeeding period of crisis before Civil War broke out: but I believe, the date of the outbreak was 1816, and the scene a brilliant ball given by M. D——, munitionergeneral. You may expect to hear much of the deeds of the Baroness, as protagonist in the strife, but she hardly figures in the story at all: a few days before she had had a talk with an old school-friend, a certain Mme. B., wife of a banker, and now seemed only anxious to keep in the back-ground. At the ball it somehow came about, that our commissary, now become a supervisor of military stores, was struck by the beauty of Mme. B., and gazed at her more amorously than is proper for a married man. Towards two in the morning the banker decided that he could wait no longer for his wife, and went home to bed, leaving her at the ball.

When all the guests were leaving, the Baroness said to her friend Mme. B.: "Of course you must come with us, my dear; we'll drop you at your house. Where's my Baron? Here! give Emily your arm." And so the supervisor found himself, in the carriage, sitting close to a woman whom he had seen all the evening receiving homage as a queen, but from whom he had failed to get a single look. There she was, radiating youth and beauty, and all unconscious of the statuesque curves of her shoulders, and their marbly whiteness that the ball-dress left uncovered. Her face still glowed with the excitement of the evening, as if to rival the sheen of satin over her bosom; her eyes were live diamonds, set beneath a brow whose purity, intensified by the tresses black as night that fell in wayward curls upon it, suggested the milky plumage of some African storks. The ring of her voice would have awoken an answering chord in the deadest heart: indeed such an atmosphere of love surrounded her, that Robert d'Arbrissel himself must have succumbed. The Baron glanced at his wife, who seemed to have fallen asleep in her corner, overcome

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by the fatigues of the dance: he could not help comparing her dress and appearance with Emily's. On such occasions the presence of a wife gives an edge to unlawful desires: the looks that the Baron gave alternately to his wife and to her friend were easy to interpret, and Mme. B. interpreted them. "Poor Louise, she's exhausted!" said the enchantress; "Going out doesn't suit her, she has simple tastes: at Écouen she was always reading."

"And you, how did you amuse yourself there?"

"Oh! I thought of nothing but acting plays, I had a passion for it!"

"Why do you so rarely visit my wife? I have built a little theatre at our country-house near Saint-Prix, and we could act plays together."

"Whose fault is it, if I do not see your wife? You are so jealous that you never leave her free, either to visit her friends or to receive them."

"I jealous?" cried the Baron, "after four years of marriage, and three children born!"

"Hush!" said Mme. B., giving him a tap on the knuckles with her fan; "Louise may not be asleep."

The carriage stopped, and the supervisor, having got out, offered his hand to his wife's beautiful friend.

"I hope," she said, "you will not prevent Louise coming to the ball I am giving next week?" The Baron bowed respectfully.

That ball saw the triumph of Mme. de B., and the ruin of the husband of Louise: he became so desperately enamoured of Emily, that he would have lost a hundred wives for her. Whether she gave him reason or not, he conceived the hope of winning her, and from that night was assiduous in his devotions. One morning, some months after, he was calling on her, when the parlour-maid announced the Baroness. "Heavens!" cried Emily, "if Louise found you here at this hour, there is no knowing what she might think or say! I don't want to be compromised! Here, go into this closet, and don't make a sound."

The husband was trapped, and had no choice but to do as he was told.

"Good morning, my dear!" said the two women together as they embraced.

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"What have you come for so early?" Emily asked.

"Well, can't you guess? I've come to ask you for an explanation!"

"What, are we to have a duel?"

"It's your doing, my dear: I love my husband, and I'm jealous. You see, I'm not like you . . . Well, you have a right to be a flirt perhaps, being beautiful and charming, also knowing so well how to fool your husband, if indeed he concerns himself about your virtue at all! But as you will never want for lovers, I beg of you to leave my husband to me: he is always at your house, and he wouldn't come unless you encouraged him."

"Louise, darling, what a pretty jacket!"

"Do you like it? My maid's very clever, she made it all herself."

"I see I must send Anastasia to have a lesson from your Flora."

"So I count on your friendship, Emily, not to bring trouble into my home."

"My child, are you really serious? As if I could ever love your husband! what can have put such an idea into your head? That ugly, squat beast, with his bloated face! Perhaps you will tell me what attraction I could find in him? He's free with his money, I believe: that might fetch a chorus-girl . . . But if he'd all the virtues in the calendar, and were handsome as well, I shouldn't choose an old man for my lover—we must suppose that I have lovers, since it pleases you, my dear! If I have been amiable to him, if I have encouraged his foolishness now and then, it was only to amuse myself and do you a service, for I thought you had a liking for the young de Rostanges, and might be glad to have your husband out of the way . . ."

"That mincing creature?" cried Louise, "preserve me from men like de Rostanges! if you can call it a man at all, with its airs and graces and sickening talk! I assure you, I love no one but my husband . . . You may think it a joke, but it's true. And is it so surprising? He stands for father and mother to me, who have never known either; he took me a poor orphan, and made me mistress of his whole fortune. If I could not give him my love, I should try to keep his esteem: for should I lose him, what home have I to fall back on?"

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"All right, my angel, that's enough," said Emily interrupting her friend, "it's very beautiful, but apt to become a little boring."

There was some more conversation about other things, and then the Baroness departed.

"Well, my friend!" cried Mme. B., opening the door of the closet, in which the Baron had been perished with the cold, for it was the middle of winter; "are you not ashamed not to adore such an interesting little wife? Never speak to me of love, Sir! For a time you might idolise me as you say, but you would never love me as you do Louise: I could not outweigh in your heart the appeal of a virtuous woman, of home and children. A day would come when, thinking of my weakness, you would condemn me: I can hear you saying with brutal indifference, as I heard it said once and shuddered, "I have had that woman." I force myself to reason thus coldly; I must not love you, for I know that you could not give me a lasting love."

"What will convince you?" cried the Baron, gazing at the beautiful woman before him: never had she seemed to him so tantalising! No matter how cruel her words, there was a coquetry in voice and manner that seemed to give them the lie, a queenly grace in her person that seemed to command his worship still, even though it should be vain.

She answered him promptly: "When I see Louise taking a lover, and know that she has no longer any need of your love; and to make doubly sure that I am not robbing her, when you give me some proof that you no longer care for her; oh! then perhaps I may listen to you! This may seem to you a rigorous attitude," she continued in a more solemn voice; "I grant that it is, but believe me, the words are not mine, they are the conclusions of a relentless mathematics: I am but the faithful student, shirking nothing of what follows from a given proposition. You are married, and you propose to have a love-affair with me: I recognise that you cannot belong to me for ever, and therefore I should be mad to give myself to you."

"Devil!" cried the husband; "yes, you are a devil, and not a woman."

"You are very polite!" said the lady, taking hold of the bell-rope.

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"No, Emily, don't ring!" said the middle-aged lover in a calmer voice; "Forgive me! I will sacrifice everything for you!"

"But I promise you nothing!" she answered with a teasing laugh.

"God! how you make me suffer!" he cried.

"Well, have you caused no unhappiness in your life? Think of the tears that have been shed for you, tears that you might have spared! Your passion inspires no pity in me: make me feel it, make me share in it, if you want me not to laugh."

"Madam, goodbye: there is a mercy in your severity; yes, I have faults to expiate, I shall take your lesson to heart."

"That's right, go and repent!" she said in a mocking voice; "you will have a hard enough penance in making Louise happy."

They parted; but Mme. B. knew what she was doing. The Baron's love was too violent to be turned by hard words: these only served to veil her purpose, which was the separation of husband and wife—at the wife's request.

Some months later, Baron de V. and his wife still lived in the same house, but in different wings. Much sympathy was felt for the Baroness, who in society always made excuses for her husband, and whose resignation seemed angelic. The most prim persons saw nothing to blame in the friendship, which had arisen between the forlorn lady and the young Rostanges; everything was put down to the misconduct of the Baron. And when this amorous gentleman had sacrificed all that a man can, his heartless mistress started for the waters of Mont-Dore, after which she was to go to Switzerland and Italy, all on the pretext of restoring her health.

The supervisor died of a liver-stone, after being nursed with tender care by his wife: whom he never suspected, to judge by his heart-felt remorse, of having organised his temptation and fall.

This story is only one of thousands, that show the services two women can render one another. "Do me the kindness to draw off my husband:" these words raise the curtain on a comedy, in which the same feminine deceits will always appear, however

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variously clothed; the plot we have given is a fair specimen. Remember, husbands; and never trust any friend of your wife's. A treachery of this sort seldom fails, for it is seconded by two enemies that always accompany man, desire and vanity.

4 FRIENDS OF THE LOVER.

A man will hasten to warn another that he has dropped a bank-note, or even that his handkerchief is falling out of his pocket, but will look on quietly while his wife is being stolen. Yet strange as this moral inconsequence may appear, we seem to see an explanation of it in the fact, that the law itself is shy of interfering in defence of matrimonial rights: naturally, then, the mere citizen hesitates to act as a sort of conjugal police. Or is it the other way? does the law express the hesitation of humanity, which does not feel, as in the case of a man losing a handkerchief, that motive for warning him which is the basis of all morals, and is expressed in the precept, "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you?" But observe! this would mean, that when it is a wife that is being stolen, the onlooker identifies himself with the thief, instead of with the owner, as in the case of the handkerchief: so this is really what has to be explained. By what reasoning are we to justify, what colourable pretext can we find for the help, which a celibate on the war-path never asks for in vain? Men who would never dream of aiding and abetting a common theft feel no scruple about drawing off a husband, inviting him to a theatre or even to some disreputable house, in order to clear the way for a comrade: whose evening's work may result in a bastard in the family, that as co-heir will deprive his brothers of a portion of their just inheritance; not to mention the unhappiness of the husband, and finally of the wife, possibly also his own death in a duel. Homes have been broken up, fratricide has been committed, where domestic bliss might still have reigned, if only a friend had refused to lend himself to a plot, which passes in the world for a harmless frolic. Alas, how rare is perfect uprightness! and how often the man who thinks he has the most of it has the least!

Every man has some hobby, to which he is devoted: yours may be hunting or fishing, gambling, music, money or good feeding; no matter what it is, it will be used to bait the trap the

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lover will set for you. His invisible hand will be directing your friends or his, whether or not they are conscious of the part they play in the little drama he has devised, to draw you away from home, to make you leave your wife a prey to his desires. A lover will pass whole months if necessary, thinking out the construction of his mouse-trap.

I remember seeing one of the cleverest of men fall a victim. He was an attorney of Normandy, you know what that means, and he had been long in practise. The Cantal Hussars were stationed at the time in the little town of B., where the old pettiogger lived; and a smart officer had conceived a passion for his wife. Though she was aware of it, and had given signs to her lover that he would be welcomed, they had never got a chance of meeting in private; and now the regiment was to leave the following day. This was the fourth military man, that the lawyer had triumphed over. After dinner the husband was strolling in his garden, whence there was a view of the country for some miles, when the officers of the regiment arrived to bid him farewell. Suddenly a flame broke out on the horizon, rising lurid against the sky, for it was already dusk. "My God! there's a village on fire, it must be La Dandinière!" cried in all innocence an elderly major, who had been a guest at dinner. All sprang on to their horses, even the lawyer following them on his hack. The young wife smiled to find herself alone, for the lover had whispered to her, "It's only a rick!" and she had seen him disappear into a shrubbery, when the others dashed off. The triumph was complete! but to give the plot a nice finish, the lover had arranged for a trooper to warn him of the return of the cavalcade, in time for him to make a circuit and join them: thus at the cost of some moments of pleasure he was able to ride back beside the husband, a delicate attention only too rare in cavalry officers.

Truly, in the duel of marriage your only chance lies in never taking your eyes off your opponent: if you turn your head for a single instant, the sword of the celibate will run you through.

5 THE LADY'S MAID.

The prettiest lady's maid I ever saw was in the employ of Mme. V., who to this day is one of the most distinguished women of fashion in Paris, and is generally believed to get on very well with her

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husband. Her Célestine was a person of so many perfections, that to give a picture of her one would need to translate the thirty verses, said to be written round the seraglio of the Grand Turk, each describing exactly the thirty beauties of woman.

"Is it vanity makes you so rash," said another lady once to Mme. V., "as to keep so exquisite a creature about you?"

"Wait, my dear! you might have a use for someone like Célestine yourself one of these days!"

"I suppose she's a very good maid; dresses you well, no doubt?"

"Far from it!"

"Perhaps she's a good needle-woman?"

"Célestine? she never touches needle and thread!"

"She's very devoted, then?"

"If she is, her devotion costs me more than any disloyalty could!"

"This is a mystery! Is she by any chance your foster-sister?"

"Sister-in-law would be nearer the mark! Listen, she's good for nothing, but she's the most useful person in my house: I've promised her twenty thousand francs if she stays ten years with me. Oh! she'll have earned it well, and I'll have had value for the money!" As she said this, Mme. V. gave an expressive toss to her head, and her young companion at last understood.

When a woman has no trusted friend, to relieve her of a husband's amorosity, she has to fall back on her maid, and it is a resource that seldom fails. Put yourself in the husband's place! After ten years of marriage to find under your very roof, to see about the house at all hours, a fresh and blooming damsel not yet twenty years of age, the treasures of whose beauty, covered but not concealed by a neat costume, seem a perpetual challenge; whose air of innocence, and eyes respectfully lowered before you, only serve to remind you that the marriage-bed has no secrets for her, that she is wise as she is virginal! if this does not tempt you, if your marital virtue is proof against such attractions, then you are not fit to be married! Not even Saint Anthony himself could remain cold before such witchery! and the husband has no mystic vision to sustain him, morality is represented for him by a severe and haughty female, often refusing him even the regulation pleasures, that should be virtue's reward. Where is

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the husband, stoical enough to endure at once torture by fire and torture by ice? Why play the hero, anyhow? Where to you appears a new harvest of pleasure, the damsel sees possibilities of profit, and your wife her liberty: it is a little family pact, that should be amicably signed. Your wife does with regard to marriage, what the young men about town do with regard to military service: if their names are on the list after the lots have been drawn, they buy a man to carry the rifle for them, to die in their place or endure any other unpleasantness of war.

The beauty of this scheme is that the same means, which obtain for the wife her pleasure, serve to put the husband in the wrong. Some women carry subtlety to such an extreme, as to feign ignorance to the maid, letting her imagine with the husband, that in acting her part she is deceiving the author of the comedy. They trust to nature to give the stage-directions, thus reserving to themselves the power to denounce, when expedient, both the mistress and the lover. Nevertheless, I have heard women discuss very seriously the dangers involved in the use of this weapon, deadly as it is to the enemy: it is necessary, they say, to know very well both one's husband and the creature to whom he is delivered, otherwise a woman may become the victim of her own strategy. As a general rule, the more hot-blooded a husband is, the more chary a woman should be of resorting to this plan. But on the whole, we are inclined to think the dangers have been over-estimated, perhaps from a lurking jealousy in women. How can a husband who has taken the bait raise objections, should his severer half, on finding that her maid has got into trouble, send her back to the country with a baby and a pension?

6 THE DOCTOR.

One of the most powerful auxiliaries of a respectable woman, who wishes to obtain an amicable divorce from her husband, is the doctor. The services he renders, unconsciously as often as not, are often of such importance, that there is hardly a house in France where the doctor is not chosen by Madam herself. To start with, every doctor knows how much his reputation depends on the women, and consequently he does his best to please them. It is true that once a man of talent has made his name, he will not voluntarily be a party to fraudulent designs: but often he

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lends his aid without suspecting it. Probably a husband, instructed by the adventures of his youth, will take the precaution in the early days of marriage of choosing his wife's doctor; and until it dawns on his feminine antagonist, what uses are to be made of this functionary, she will accept contentedly the doctor imposed upon her. Then gradually she will begin to try the power of her seductions, and if they fail to win him to her purpose, she will choose a moment of confidences to make this singular announcement to her husband: "I don't like the doctor's way of touching me." It is quite enough, that adviser is called in no more: and so it comes about, that the wife chooses her own doctor. Indeed she often does so from the beginning, for the reason that young husbands are likely to know only beardless doctors, to whom they are little inclined to trust their wives.

Well one fine morning the doctor comes out of Madam's room, to which she has been confined for the last fortnight, and acting on instructions, he says to you cheerfully: "I don't see that Madam's condition need occasion you any serious anxiety; at the same this constant drowsiness, and general lack of interest in life, along with a congenital tendency to spinal affection, might become dangerous if neglected. Her lymph is inclined to thicken . . . I should say, change of air is what she needs most, and a course of the waters: send her to Barèges or to Plombières!"

"Very good, doctor!"

And so you let your wife go to Plombières, where she only wanted to go because Captain Charles is stationed in the Vosges. She returns in the best of health and spirits, and you speak very highly of the waters of Plombières. She wrote to you every day, was prodigal of endearments from a distance, so you have every reason to be happy in your wife: what good news it is, that the symptoms of dorsal affection have entirely disappeared!

We have seen a little pamphlet, inspired probably by hatred since it was published in Holland, which gives some very curious details as to the means resorted to by Mme. de Maintenon, in conjunction with Fagon the doctor, for putting off Louis XIV. We trust it will never fall into the hands of your wife, or you may expect your doctor some morning to threaten you, as Fagon did his royal master, with a fatal apoplexy, unless you subject yourself to a rule. The title of the work is *Mademoiselle de Saint-Tron*: as

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a piece of buffoonery it is pleasant enough, indeed it is possible that it had no political intention, but was written by a courtier to while away an idle hour. The same idea has been used in modern times by the author of *The Young Doctor*: but this delightful comedy is very superior to the lampoon, whose title I only mentioned as it might be of interest to bibliophiles. We are glad, for the credit of the seventeenth century, that the work of our witty contemporary relieves us of the necessity of quoting the other.

Often a doctor, genuinely deceived by the manœuvres of a young and seemingly modest woman, will come to you and say discreetly: "I don't like to say too much to your wife, but you will understand if I warn you, that any physical excitement would be dangerous to her health at present. As long as the inflammation is confined to her chest, we can hold it in check: but she needs quiet, perfect quiet, or the disease may spread. A pregnancy, my dear Sir, would be her death at this stage."

"But, doctor?"

"Ha, ha! I can imagine how you feel about it!" and he strides out laughing. Like the rod of Moses, the physician's ordinance makes and unmakes generations; he banishes you from the conjugal bed when he thinks fit, and the same arguments will serve him to restore you to it again. He treats your wife for diseases she has never had, to cure her of those she has; and you are in the dark about it all, for their scientific jargon is like the wafers in which they give their pills.

With her doctor a respectable woman is like a minister in the House, who is sure of his majority; she has only to give the word, and he will order rest or distraction, town or country, riding or the waters, as may best suit her pleasure and interest. If she wants to have a separate room from yours, she will surround herself with all the paraferalia of sickness, will have an aged nurse and tables loaded with phials and bottles; and from the midst of her ramparts she will defy you with languishing airs. You will be entertained with accounts of the emulsions and other potions she has taken, the plasters and cataplasms that have been applied; you will have to learn her degrees of fever from day to day, till at last your love collapse before this battery of ailments. But remember this, with your love will fall that singular abstraction we call your honour: for the moment you cease to concern yourself

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about your wife, the object of her pretences will be gained, she will be able to devote herself wholly to the lover.

Thus your wife will contrive, that every point of contact you have with the world shall be a point of resistance: you will find all armed against you, will be alone in a world of enemies.

But let us suppose that you are such a favourite of fortune as to have married a friendless orphan without religion, and so have neither priest nor mother-in-law to cope with; also that your perspicacity is such that no traps set by lovers can deceive you. As for doctors, let us give your wife a practitioner of such celebrity, as to have no time for the affectations of wives; at the same time let us inspire you, in the event of Madam winning the homage of your Esculapius, to ask for a consultation: which will enable you to call in an incorruptible man, as often as the regular adviser has given you any uneasiness. One last condition in your favour, and the most important of all: let us suppose that you still love your fair enemy with a high courage, and so have the will to resist every possible attack, even the lure of a Célestine. Now! will your position be safe, do you think? Ha ha! you may have triumphed over all the allies mentioned hitherto, but let us inform you, that these have only been skirmishes, the grand attack has yet to be launched! When your wife sees you still holding out, after she has woven round you this web of art, she will know that it is time to use the weapons given her by nature, weapons rendered yet more deadly by civilisation: it is of these that the next Meditation will treat.

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MEDITATION XXVI: VARIOUS WEAPONS.

A WEAPON is anything that can inflict a wound: thus words may be weapons, and are often the cruellest a man can use against his kind. The genius of Schiller, at once so lucid and so profound, seems to have revealed to him in all their processes, as it were the action of an acid, the effects of certain ideas on the human organism. These the poet exhibits for us in those terrible scenes of *The Brigands*, where the villain by means of a few ideas makes such gashes in the heart of an old man, that he finally dies of the torment. Perhaps a day is coming, when science will be able to observe the mechanism of our minds and record the passage of a sentiment. Proof may then be given of the occult belief, that the intellectual system is in some sort an interior man, having a will as strong and independent as that of the visible man; and that between these two powers there may arise a war, not less fierce than those in which men lose life and limb. But these are questions for other studies, which we shall publish in their turn: one of the most important is already in the hands of our friends, it bears the title, *PATHOLOGY OF SOCIAL LIFE, or Meditations, mathematical, physical, chemical and transcendental on the manifestations of Thought, in its various forms, as produced in the present state of society by food, clothes, walking, riding, etc., and expressed in word or action*. In this work, many of those great questions are agitated: we only touched on the metaphysical here to warn you, that the higher social classes are too skilled in reasoning, ever to use any but intellectual weapons.

Just as tender souls are met with in bodies rough and rude as mountains, so there are souls of iron inhabiting bodies whose supple grace attracts every eye, whose tenderness seems to solicit caresses; but if you so much as stroke the exterior person with your hand, the *homo duplex* of Buffon is aroused within, and will tear you with its jagged form. These are a peculiar class of beings, whom we hope you will seldom run against in your journey through life: but we have to warn you, that the description will apply only too well to your wife, as you will find her in the later stages

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of the Civil War. Every tender sentiment, that nature has implanted in the human breast, will become a dagger in her hand: stabbed every hour of the day, you will necessarily lose heart for the strife as your love ebbs out of the wounds. In accordance with the three types of character we have tried to distinguish, as embracing every possible feminine constitution, we shall divide this Meditation into three sections, as follows:

- 1 THE HEADACHE;
- 2 THE NERVOUS-ATTACK;
- 3 MODESTY IN MARRIAGE.

1 THE HEADACHE.

Women are naturally very tender-hearted, and this characteristic is often taken advantage of by designing persons. A husband's first instinctive means of defence is an appeal to the feminine heart, which seldom fails to respond. But this sensitiveness receives many shocks from the blunt facts of marriage, as we have demonstrated in the Meditations on the Predestined and on the Honeymoon. Thus the husband, without realising what he is doing, gradually opens the eyes of his companion to the traps he is setting for her. There generally comes a moment in the Civil War, when the wife has an instantaneous vision of her whole married history, and is enraged at the way you have traded on her sympathetic nature. There are very few then who do not conceive the idea of turning this same weapon against the husband, and of dominating him by the power of their very weakness: the impulse seems natural enough, whether you like to ascribe it to vengeance or to ambition. They proceed with great skill to test the strings of pity in their husbands' hearts, until they have ascertained which of them will vibrate most readily: they are then ready to go to work. In the same way a child, when it is given a mechanical toy, wants to know all about the works, and goes on shaking and banging it till it is broken, caring little in his impatience about the game it was intended for. Women, if they kill you, will mourn you charmingly, as the most virtuous and excellent of beings, too beautifully sensitive for this world.

Thus your wife will arm herself with the pity she has found in you, will strike you with the generous sentiment that brings

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you to the side of sufferers. However ready a man may be to quarrel with his wife when she is full of life and health, he will become as limp as she at sight of her on a sick bed; so if yours has not attained her secret end by the means of attack already described, she will certainly seize this all-powerful weapon. And so thoroughly will she enter into the new strategy, that you will see the young woman, whom you married in the flower of youth and beauty, actually changing before your eyes into a pale and sickly creature.

One ailment, of infinite possibilities for a wife, is the Headache; it is the easiest of all to feign, and it has no visible symptoms: she has only to say, "I have a headache." If your wife is amusing herself at your expense, no one can give the lie to her skull, whose bony architecture guards its secret from both touch and sight. In our opinion the Headache is the queen of maladies, providing women as it does with a means of attack at once so easy and so terrible. There are some coarse and violent men, who remembering the wiles of their mistresses in the happy days of their celibacy, flatter themselves that they are not to be caught in this common snare: but all their blustering and all their reasoning collapse before the magic of those four words, "I have a headache."

If the husband still protests, if he challenges the power of this *il buondo cani* of marriage, he is lost. Imagine a young woman voluptuously reclining on a couch, her head nicely tilted on a rich cushion, and one lily hand hanging down to the floor: a book lies open at her feet, and on a little table is her cup of lime-water. Now place a great strong husband before her: he has been striding up and down the room, while the little invalid, every time that he turned to continue his march, has let her eyebrows go up in a pained expression, which should have warned him that the slightest movement jars her. Now he has mustered up all his courage to protest against the fraud, and standing beside the couch he utters this bold phrase: "Yes, but *have* you a headache?"

At the words the young wife makes an attempt to sit up, she raises an arm that falls again feebly, she raises glazed eyes to the ceiling, she raises all she can; then looking at you with a lifeless expression, she summons up strength to speak: "What should I have then? and my head splitting till I long for death! Is that all the consolation you have to give me? You men! it's easy

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to see why nature did not engage you to bring children into the world! Thankless egoists that you are, you take us in the flower of youth, fresh and blooming and straight-stemmed, all that you desire; then when your pleasures have crushed and withered us, you blame us for the loss of beauty, cannot forgive our sacrifices for you! Such is the lot of women: you allow neither virtue in our suffering, nor suffering in our virtue! You want children, we sit up night after night nursing them; our health is ruined from bearing them, you neither know nor care the serious ailments it gives rise to . . . Oh my head, what agony! . . . Nearly every mother is subject to headaches, but your wife has to be an exception: you laugh at her pain, there is neither pity nor justice in you . . . Please stop the clock, the movement of the pendulum enters into my brain. Thank you. Oh! how shall I bear this pain? Can you give me nothing for it? Yes, go out and—and don't come back, leave me to suffer in peace: the smell of your clothes makes my head worse!"

What can you answer? A voice within you may cry, "But is she really in pain?" you cannot be sure! And so nearly all husbands quit the field of battle tamely, while their wives out of the corner of an eye watch them tip-toing across the floor, and gently shutting the door of the room that henceforth shall be sanctuary, inviolable! Behold the Headache, true or false, established as master in your house! and well the usurper knows how to enforce his authority! By this means alone, a woman can break a husband's resistance: the malady takes her when she likes, where she likes, and as badly as she likes; there are five-day headaches, ten-minute headaches, continuous and intermittent headaches. Your wife will be like a musician with an instrument she is master of; she will play infinite variations on the same theme, will repeat it in every key. One day you find her in bed, with the blinds drawn down; the pain is acute, she is in a prostrate condition. You learn that His Majesty the Headache has ordered silence everywhere, from the lodge of the concierge, who happened to be splitting wood, to the loft where your groom was throwing harmless bundles of straw down into the yard. On the faith of this headache you go out, feeling you cannot help; but on your return, when you go to inquire after Madam, you find she has decamped! After a while she comes in, looking fresh and rosy:

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"The doctor came!" she says; "he ordered me exercise, and I feel much better for it."

Another day you knock at Madam's door; her maid comes out, and opening her eyes in pained surprise at sight of you, she says with importance: "Oh Sir! Madam has one of her headaches, I never saw her so bad: we have just sent for the doctor."

"Happy man," said Marshall Augueran to a friend, "to have a pretty wife!"

"To *have*?" replied the friend, "perhaps I have my wife ten days in the year, but no more! These b—— women always have headaches or something of the sort!"

Headaches in France serve the purpose of the sandals, which the Spanish priest leaves outside the door of the confessional when he has a penitent. If your wife has a foreboding of hostile intentions on your part, and wishes to make herself as inviolable as the Charter of Louis XVIII, she proceeds to stage a headache: after groaning and sighing about the house for half a day, the heroic woman has to give up and take to bed; the blinds of her room are pulled down and cold bandages are prepared; and when you go to visit your beloved, though she puts on as bright a face as she can, now and then little cries of pain are wrung from her, that make your heart bleed. Oh! the cleverness of voice and gesture, the convincing art of it all! you could really believe she was being flayed alive! Could any man be so indelicate now as to mention desires, that bespeak in him a condition of robust health? mere politeness forbids him! Every wife knows, that the headache is a way of posting above the marriage-bed that notice, which at the last moment sends home the enthusiasts of the Comédie-Française: for across the attractive announcement appears a slip saying, "Mlle. Mars unable to appear owing to a sudden indisposition."

Oh Headache! protector of wayward loves, defence against conjugal tyranny, shield on which marital desires are all carried to burial! All-powerful Headache! can it be that lovers have never celebrated you in song, have never personified you, never deified you? Oh magical, oh illusive Headache! blessed be the brain which first conceived you! Shame on the doctor who shall ever find a remedy! Rightly do wives bless you alone of maladies, remembering the blessings you dispense to them! Oh illusive, oh magical Headache!

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2 THE NERVOUS-ATTACK.

Behold, there is a power even greater than the Headache! and to the glory of France be it said, the discovery of this power is one of the latest triumphs of the Parisian mind. As with all the most useful advances in the arts and sciences, it is not known to what individual genius the honour of it is due. This alone is certain: it was towards the middle of the last century that *the vapours* made their appearance in France. Thus while Papin was applying to mechanical problems the force of vaporised water, a Frenchwoman, unhappily nameless, had the glory of endowing her sex with the power of vaporising the fluids of their bodies. Soon the prodigious effects obtained by the vapours drew attention to the nervous system; thus was born the science of neurology, which fibre by fibre has grown, until its physiologists, headed by the great Philips, have discovered the nervous fluid itself, have established the laws of its circulation and perhaps are on the eve of identifying the organs of its evaporation. Who knows but we may even learn the secret of its birth? we should then have penetrated into the mysterious realm of a power alluded to more than once in this book, under the name of *the will*. And all, thanks to the affectation of a lady! But let us not encroach on the territory of medical philosophy: nerves and the vapours are only our concern in so far as they affect marriage.

Nervous-attacks—a pathological term including all the affections of the nervous system—are of two kinds, according to the use made of them by married women: for our physiology has a lofty disdain for medical classifications. We distinguish nervous-attacks as (1) Classic, and (2) Romantic. The chief characteristic of the Classic order is a warlike ferocity; the victim of the attack becomes violent in her movements as an inspired priestess, behaves with the frenzied abandonment of a Bacchante: it is pure paganism. In contrast to this, the Romantic Nervous-attack is soft and plaintive, like the ballads sung amid the mists of Scotland; its victims turn pale and falter, like maidens dying of love. The mood of this order is elegiac, all the melancholy of the North is in it. That woman there with the black hair and flashing eyes, with the full lips, the healthy tint and vigorous hand, will be frantic and convulsive, she will be typical of the Classic Nervous-attack; while this blond with the pallid face will be a

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nervous victim of the Romantic order: this latter will be essentially an exponent of the vapours, while the power of the other will lie in the coursing of the fluid through her body.

Often a husband, on returning home, finds his wife in tears. "What's the matter, sweetheart?" he asks with manly sympathy.

"Oh, nothing!"

"But you were crying!"

"Was I? well don't ask me why . . . Oh, I'm unhappy! I've been seeing faces in the clouds, and I never see them unless something dreadful is going to happen . . . I feel as if I were going to die!" She goes on to speak of her dead father, of her dead uncle, of her dead cousin; she calls up their melancholy shades, she enters into all their illnesses, is herself attacked by their diseases: now she feels her heart beating too fast, now it is her spleen that is thickening. You say to yourself with a doggy satisfaction, "I know what all this means." Then you start to console her: but what can you do with a woman who yawns like a chasm, complains of her chest, starts to cry again, and finally begs you to leave her to her sad thoughts? If you try to reason, she confides to you her last wishes, follows her own funeral, buries herself and lays on the grave a branch of weeping-willow. You would have had her join you in a joyous epithalamion, a song of praise for a union blessed, and all you get from her is an epitaph framed in black. Instead of a woman to console, you find a vaporous form, like that made by Zeus to deceive Ixion.

There are some still loyal wives, who use this weapon to extract from tender-hearted husbands a silk shawl or a diamond ornament, the payment of their debts or the price of a box at the opera; but generally speaking, the vapours are only employed for the decisive manœuvre of the Civil War. In the name of her dorsal consumption or her weak chest, a woman will need a change from time to time. You see her weak movements as she dresses, you see her stretched all day on a couch, with every symptom of the spleen; it is with difficulty that her dearest friend, or even her mother or sister, can persuade her to get up and go out. The couch seems to devour her; she has no interest in life but to lie there and write elegies. At last the doctor insists, and Madam goes into the country for a fortnight . . . Of course the meaning of it all is, that Madam goes where she likes, and does what she

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likes, when she likes! You are warned by our words, yes! but will you or any other husband ever have the brutality to oppose, what is presented to you as a dying wish? will you prevent a wife, suffering so cruelly, from seeking any cure? You cannot see into your wife's nervous system! you only know that after long debate it has been established that no suffering is comparable to that produced by nerves. You know that, and you love your wife: now what can you do?

It is chiefly in the marriage-bed that this weapon is used, for there your wife has no defence but the girdle of Venus, which you have declared to be a myth: so unless she take refuge in a headache, she will have the vapours. Among the wives who give battle with the vapours, there is a fair-haired type, peculiarly delicate and sensitive, who has a special talent for tears. How admirably they weep! and what command they have of the fountain, turning it on when and how they like! Their offensive takes the form of a sublime resignation, and their victories are the more brilliant in that they require no sacrifice of health. If a husband is provoked into declaring that he will have no more of this nonsense, they give him a submissive look and bow their heads in silence. This pantomime nearly always achieves its purpose; in the conjugal strife a man would rather his wife answered him back, for that has a rousing effect on him, he feels himself becoming more formidable. With these women there is no stimulus; their silence saps your resolution, even infects you with a germ of remorse. It is said that murderers, who have met with no resistance from their victims, experience a double fear; they imagine that the dead person is threatening them, as well as the law. Like them you would like to feel, that you only resorted to violence in self-defence. You walk away from the silent martyr, you bite your lip and return: at your approach she takes out a handkerchief and wipes away her tears, displaying them by ostentatiously hiding them. You are touched; you beg your Caroline to speak to you, forgetting all your indignation before the pathos of this spectacle. Then she speaks, and sobs but still speaks: her eloquence is like the bursting of a mill-dam. You are overwhelmed by the torrent of words; a confusion of disconnected ideas comes surging down on you like floating branches, you are stunned, you are swept away.

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Frenchwomen, especially Parisians, excel in scenes of this sort; their gifts of coquetry, their dress and the modulation of their voices, make them irresistible in pathetic parts. Often like an April sun, a mischievous smile breaks through the tears of these adorable comedians, when they see their husbands anxiously tearing the silk which presses on their chests, or trying to replace the comb which held together the tresses, now falling in showers of gold upon their shoulders.

But all modern artists must bow to the genius of antiquity, with its stormy and terrific nervous-attack, the Pyrrhic dance of conjugal expressionism. What promises for a lover are in those convulsive movements, those fiery looks! How graceful are the limbs even in their frenzy! When possessed by this demon, a woman rushes as the storm, leaps as a flame, becomes sinuous as a wave gliding up a beach; she is transported by love, has prophetic visions; above all she sees the present, bears her husband to the ground and leaves in his mind a lasting terror. It is enough for a man to have once seen his wife, when the fit is on her, resisting the efforts of three or four strong men to hold her, scattering them as if they were feathers! he will never venture after to arouse her passions. In the same way a child, after pulling the trigger of a loaded gun, has extraordinary respect for any little spring. I once knew a husband, a meek and mild person, whose eyes followed his wife about as if she were a lioness, into whose cage he had been put, with a warning that his only hope lay in not irritating the animal. But this sort of nervous-attack is too exhausting, and is seldom seen in our time: romanticism has prevailed.

There is a type of husband we must mention, whose genius has triumphed over both the Headache and the Nervous-attack; they are of the phlegmatic sort, are thrifty of their emotions, and so their love endures long. But these sublime characters are rare! Faithful disciples of the blessed St. Thomas, who must needs put his finger into the wounds of Christ, they are endowed with an incredulity more than atheistical: amid the passion of the Nervous-attack, and the bloody-sweat of the Headache, they remain coldly critical spectators, studying the patient as an actress, nay, as a puppet, whose mechanism they have to discover! When they have found the levers, they amuse themselves by trying

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their effects; thus they soon ascertain how far the maladies are real, and how far they are the wife's counter-peripetia.

But supposing a husband by these almost super-human gifts, coupled with very human efforts of attention, shall have seen through all the artifices we have described hitherto, there is still one more resource left to the woman whom love has made desperate, and it cannot but vanquish the enemy it is employed against. This terrible stratagem is in a measure repugnant to the wife herself, for it means that to gain her freedom she must sacrifice an empire: would she do this if there were any chance of failure? No! the blow she strikes now is as certain as the headsman's. With these thoughts we usher in the last section of our Meditation on Weapons.

3 MODESTY IN MARRIAGE.

Before discussing modesty, it would perhaps be as well to make sure that it exists. May it not be in truth a form of coquetry in woman? Or again, it might be argued, since half the women on the earth go practically naked, that modesty is an assertion by the individual of rights of property in her own body. Or is it a mere phantom conjured up by society, as Diderot maintained, on the ground that it vanishes before poverty or misery? We shall have little difficulty in disposing of these and such-like contentions.

An ingenious author has lately claimed, that men have much more modesty than women. He bases his argument on the experience of a great many surgeons; but it seems to us that his conclusions would only be valid, if it were equally common for men to be treated by women surgeons: there would then be a true basis of comparison. We find the argument of Diderot open to an even more serious objection: for while it is true that modesty disappears in certain crises, the same may be said of all other human sentiments. He might as well deny the existence of life, because death is known to occur! Let us allow as much modesty to one sex as to the other, and try to discover in what it consists.

Rousseau, while justifying the coquetries of the female, as a necessary device of nature for the attraction of the male, insisted that modesty was only a form of this coquetry: this view seems to us equally false. The writers of the eighteenth century

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certainly rendered great service to society; but their philosophy, based as it was on sensualism, went no deeper than the human epidermis. They only took account of the external universe, and by thus limiting themselves retarded considerably the moral development of man, which demands a science based on the principles of the Gospel: happily these are again being studied by the fervent disciples of the Son of Man in this age. To penetrate the mysteries of thought, to discover the organs of the human soul and exhibit the mechanism of its forces; to define the faculty it seems to possess of moving independently of the body, of seeing and communicating without employment of physical means; in short, the geometry and dynamics of the soul: this will be the glorious contribution of the next century to the treasury of human science. Perhaps at this moment we are quarrying the blocks, which shall serve some architect of genius for the building of that sublime edifice.

The error of Rousseau, as we have said, was the error of his century. He explained modesty by the relations of the individual to society, instead of explaining it by the relations of the individual to himself. Modesty can no more be analysed than consciousness, it must be apprehended by the imagination: perhaps we can best suggest the nature of modesty, by describing it as a consciousness in the body. Thus while the mind controls the movements of thought, this material consciousness, commonly known as modesty, controls our external movements: which is as much as to say that modesty is conscience, a term by which we distinguish a special case of consciousness. The acts which offend us most are those which not only clash with our interests, but also strike us as immoral; for they offend both consciousness and conscience. If repeated, they will certainly arouse our bitterest antagonism. Now as the emotion of love embraces in itself all other emotions, so modesty in love embraces both consciousness and conscience; therefore an offence against this modesty will be a double offence, which if repeated will never be forgiven. All this bears out our assertion in the Conjugal Catechism (see Meditation IV.), that extreme modesty is a vital condition of marriage; the corollary being, that by immodesty marriage is infallibly dissolved. This principle, which demands a long process of reasoning for its demonstration by the physiologist, is acted on by all women

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instinctively. Modesty is implanted in them at birth, and continues as a natural re-action against the exaggerated importance, given by society to external pleasures; thus it becomes the keystone of their being, dominating all other sentiments. We may even go so far as to say, that modesty is woman herself; for once the magic veil has fallen, this veil which hides the brutality of natural acts, letting only their beauty shine through, then woman also disappears. The maiden of Tahiti, clothed in the virginal candour of her soul, offers all the graces of love, appeals alike to heart and intellect: beside her the European woman, with her artificial substitutes for the veil of modesty, only disgusts and revolts. Without going to the South Seas for a background, your wife can create this effect by carrying European indelicacy a step farther: there for you is the last deadly weapon she will seize, to destroy the love you may still feel for her! She arms herself with the ugliness of nature; this woman who would regard it as a calamity, were her lover to see the least of the mysteries of her toilet, will take pleasure in exhibiting herself to her husband in the most disillusioning situations.

Part of the system will be a cold-blooded matter-of-factness, by which she will hope to drive you from the marriage bed. There was no malice in Mrs. Shandy's interruption, when she reminded the potential father of Tristram to get up and wind the clock; but your wife will deliberately prepare the most inappropriate questions. The act of love will be an event to be bargained about, almost to be discussed through your solicitor; and when it comes! where once all was life and movement, you will find the stillness of death. Elsewhere we have given proof, that the comic aspect of certain conjugal crises is not lost on us, and so we may be excused now if we do not develop all the resources of pleasantry, that the muse of Martial or Verville would find in such feminine manœuvres. Those poets would revel in the subtle perfidy of the wife, in the disconcerting frankness of her talk, and the cold water it throws on romance: for us the subject is too serious for comedy, and too comic for serious treatment. When a woman goes to such extremes, whole worlds separate her from her husband. But this is only when she intends it: for there are some women possessed of such charm, that they can tease a husband with cynicism of this sort, and at the same time delight him by their

Meditation XXVI: Various Weapons

wit and vivacity. As Sully put it, their *beak is so well sharpened*, that they win pardon for all their caprices, making what fun they like of their husbands without ever alienating their hearts.

But where is the heart so stout, the man so dauntless in love, as to persist in his passion when confronted, after ten years of marriage, by a wife who not only does not love him but proves it to him hourly by her rebuffs, who is deliberately bad-tempered and hard to please, who trades on ailments, as often as not feigned, and who finally abjures her woman's vows of elegance and cleanliness, speculating on the power of indecency to drive a husband in disgust to give her up? That is what you will have to face, my dear Sir, and it is the more horrible inasmuch as—

XCII. MODESTY OR IMMODESTY MEANS NOTHING TO LOVERS.

We are now arrived, in the Divine Comedy of marriage, at the lowest circle, the very bottom of the pit of Hell. There is something inexpressibly terrible in the situation of a married woman, when an illegitimate love draws her from the duties of wife and mother: for whether she resist or not, she is equally damned. As Diderot has well said, infidelity in a wife is like disbelief in a priest, human failure cannot be more complete. A woman can commit no greater crime, for all crimes are implied in this. On the other hand if she continue to belong to her husband, she is false to the love of her heart, she is acting a blasphemy. Nor is this all she has to think of, there is the happiness of lover and husband: if both love her she must decide which she will cause to suffer.

It is the latter dilemma of feminine life, which accounts for much that is odd in the behaviour of women: there lies the secret of their mystery, and often of their falseness. There is something in the thought to make one shudder. Yet why need they hesitate? for if we take account only of this life's happiness, the wife who chooses to sacrifice her own and her lover's on the altar of virtue will in the end have caused the least suffering. Yet nearly all set a half-hour's ecstasy against the sufferings of a life-time, and perhaps of generations to come. If they are not preserved by the instinct of self-deterrence, what weight will moral precepts have, or the threat of a mere two years at the Madelonettes? Villainy so resolute becomes almost sublime! But if you think of all that

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is sacrificed, and then of the deity to whom it is offered; if you reflect that he is a brother of ours, a man who buttons his coat just as we do, a man very likely whom we would not trust with sixpence, it is enough to raise a laugh that would resound through all Paris, that uttered at the Luxembourg would startle a donkey grazing on Montmartre.

If it seems to you extraordinary, Reader, that in a work on marriage so many subjects have been broached, we would have you know, that not only is marriage the whole of human life, it is two human lives. Look at the matter in this way: if there are two horses you are going to back to win two different races, the chances against the double event will be many more than the chances against the two separately; and in the same way the uniting of two lives multiplies alarmingly the hazards, already many and various, to which a human being is exposed.

Meditation XXVII: Final Symptoms

MEDITATION XXVII: FINAL SYMPTOMS.

THE author in his life has met so many persons with a craze for knowing the right time, the mean astronomical time, and for possessing watches regulated to a second, and for regulating their lives in accordance with them, that he judged this Meditation essential to the tranquility of many husbands. It would have been cruel to leave these men, so passionate as they are for the hour, without a sextant to give them the position of the sun in the matrimonial zodiac, so that they may know the exact moment of his entering the house of Minotaurus.

In truth an entire book might be written on *the knowledge of conjugal time*, so delicate are the observations required and so involved the calculations. The master has to confess, that his youth has only allowed him as yet to recognise a few of the signs; but he feels a just pride in being able, towards the end of his difficult enterprise, to announce that he leaves to his successors another subject for research: for much as has been written on it already, there yet remain many points to be elucidated. He offers here, without pretence at order or connexion, the rough notes he has made up to the present, hoping some day to have the leisure to co-ordinate them, so as to form a complete system. In this eminently national enterprise it is likely that others are in the field, so he will hardly be taxed with vanity if he publish now, as he surely owes it to himself to do, the signs he has observed and his method of classification. They fall naturally into two classes, corresponding to the two varieties of the minotaur, the unicorn and the bicorn. Of these the unicorn is the less malignant: he represents platonic love, or at least a passion which leaves no traces in posterity; while the bicorn is the evil with all its fruits. We have marked with an asterisk the symptoms, which we have found to indicate the presence of Minotaurus Bicornutus.

MINOTAURIC OBSERVATIONS.

I. *WHEN A WIFE, AFTER HAVING SLEPT APART FROM HER HUSBAND FOR SOME TIME, MAKES EVIDENT ATTEMPS TO LURE HIM TO

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HER BED, SHE HAS IN MIND THE MAXIM OF MARITIME LAW, "THE FLAG COVERS ALL COMMERCE."

II. A WIFE IS AT A DANCE, AND ONE OF HER WOMEN FRIENDS COMES UP TO HER AND SAYS, "YOUR HUSBAND IS VERY CLEVER!"—"YOU THINK SO?" SHE ANSWERS.

III. YOUR WIFE SUDDENLY FINDS THAT IT IS TIME TO SEND A CHILD TO SCHOOL, FROM WHOM A SHORT WHILE AGO SHE COULD NOT THINK OF BEING SEPARATED.

IV. *IN THE ABERGAVENNY DIVORCE CASE THE VALET DEPOSED, THAT HER LADYSHIP HAD AN ABHORRENCE OF ANYTHING BELONGING TO HIS LORDSHIP; WITNESS HAD OFTEN SEEN HER BURNING ORNAMENTS THAT HIS LORDSHIP HAD TOUCHED IN HER ROOM.

V. IF AN INDOLENT WOMAN BECOMES SUDDENLY ENERGETIC, DEVOTES HERSELF TO MASTERING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR EXAMPLE, OR IF ANY STRIKING CHANGE OF CHARACTER IS EXHIBITED, IT IS A SURE SYMPTOM.

VI. A WIFE WHO HAS A LOVER BECOMES VERY TOLERANT.

VII. WHEN A WOMAN IS VERY HAPPY AT HEART, SHE NO LONGER CARES ABOUT GOING INTO SOCIETY.

VIII. *A HUSBAND ALLOWS HIS WIFE A HUNDRED CROWNS A MONTH TO DRESS ON, AND SHE SPENDS ABOUT DOUBLE WITHOUT CONTRACTING A DEBT ANYWHERE: ONE MIGHT MAKE A RIDDLE OF IT AND SAY, THE HUSBAND IS ROBBED, BURGLED, WHAT YOU WILL, BUT THERE IS NO BREACH OF THE LAW.

IX. *WHEN A MARRIED COUPLE SLEPT IN THE SAME BED, THE WIFE WAS CONSTANTLY ILL; NOW THAT THEY SLEEP APART, SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT IT IS TO HAVE A HEADACHE, AND SHE BECOMES MORE RADIANT WITH HEALTH EVERY DAY: A TERRIBLE SIGN!

X. A WIFE WHO TOOK NO CARE OF HER PERSON SUDDENLY BECOMES MOST FASTIDIOUS IN DRESS AND TOILET. A CASE OF MINOTAUR!

Meditation XXVII: Final Symptoms

XI. "AH! MY DEAR, I KNOW NO GREATER UNHAPPINESS THAN TO BE MISUNDERSTOOD!"

"AND HOW WONDERFUL, MY DEAR, WHEN ONE MEETS AN UNDERSTANDING PERSON!"

"IT HARDLY EVER HAPPENS!"

"I AGREE THAT SUCH BLISS IS RARE; INDEED THERE ARE NOT TWO PERSONS IN THE WORLD WHO REALLY UNDERSTAND ONE."

XII. *WHEN A WOMAN BECOMES POLITE TO HER HUSBAND, ALL IS OVER.

XIII. I ASKED HER, "WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, JANE?"

"I WENT TO YOUR FRIEND'S HOUSE TO FETCH YOUR SILVER."

"WELL! NOTHING MISSING?" I LAUGHED.

NEXT YEAR I HAPPENED TO REPEAT MY QUESTION ON THE SAME OCCASION.

"I WENT TO FETCH OUR SILVER."

"WELL! WE HAVE STILL SOME LEFT?" I LAUGHED.

BUT THIS YEAR IF I ASK HER WHERE SHE HAS BEEN, I SHALL GET A VERY DIFFERENT ANSWER: "YOU WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING, AS IF YOU WERE SOMEONE! AND YOU'RE NOT WORTH YOUR KEEP! I HAVE JUST FETCHED MY SILVER FROM MY FRIEND'S HOUSE, WHERE I WAS DINING."

"THERE'S A POINT CLEARED UP!" I SHALL LAUGH.

XIV. MISTRUST A WOMAN WHO TALKS OF HER VIRTUE.

XV. THE DUCHESS OF CHAULNES, WHEN SERIOUSLY ILL, WAS INFORMED THAT THE DUKE HAD BEGGED TO SEE HER. "IS HE THERE?" SHE ASKED.—"YES, YOUR GRACE."—"LET HIM WAIT: HE CAN COME IN WITH THE SACRAMENT." THIS MINOTAURIC ANECDOTE WAS COLLECTED BY CHAMFORT, BUT IT IS TOO TYPICAL NOT TO BE INCLUDED HERE.

XVI. *SOMETIMES A WOMAN WILL REMIND HER HUSBAND OF A DUTY HE OWES TO SOMEONE: "YOU REALLY OUGHT TO CALL ON

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MR. SO-AND-SO! YOU POSITIVELY MUST ASK SUCH-AND-SUCH A GENTLEMAN TO DINNER!"

XVII. *COME, MY SON, HOLD YOURSELF UP STRAIGHT! TRY TO GET A LITTLE STYLE! LOOK HOW MR. SO-AND-SO WALKS, AND HOW HE DRESSES!"

XVIII. WHEN A WIFE MENTIONS THE NAME OF A PARTICULAR MAN NO MORE THAN TWICE A DAY, THERE IS STILL SOME DOUBT AS TO HER FEELING FOR HIM; BUT WHEN IT COMES TO THREE TIMES A DAY, WELL!

XIX. WHEN A WIFE ALLOWS A MAN, WHO IS NEITHER A BARRISTER NOR A POLITICIAN, TO COME BACK WITH HER TO THE DOOR OF HER FLAT, SHE IS BEING VERY IMPRUDENT.

XX. THAT IS A TERRIBLE DAY WHEN A HUSBAND FINDS HIMSELF UNABLE TO EXPLAIN THE MOTIVE FOR SOME ACT OF HIS WIFE'S.

XXI. *THE WIFE WHO LETS HERSELF BE SURPRISED DESERVES HER FATE.

How should a husband behave, on observing a final symptom that leaves no doubt as to his wife's infidelity? The answer to this is easy. There are only two possible courses open, vengeance or resignation; there is no middle term between these two extremes. If you decide on vengeance, it ought to be crushing. In our opinion, the husband who does not separate from his wife for ever is nothing better than a ninny. And he is as ungenerous as he is weak: for suppose the couple agree to live together henceforth as brother and sister, the husband has an odious advantage over the woman which he cannot help making her feel.

Here are a few anecdotes, some of them unpublished hitherto; they instance rather well the different shades of conduct, that we should commend in a husband in this crisis.

M. de Roquemont was in the habit of sleeping once a month in his wife's room, and as he left in the morning he would say: "Well, come who may, I'm served!" An element of depravity there may be in it, but there is conjugal philosophy of a high

Meditation XXVII: Final Symptoms

order; politics too, if you consider the probable effect on the wife.

A certain diplomat, having seen from his study window his wife's lover arriving, went into the drawing-room and said to them: "Well, don't fight, you two, while I'm out!" That was true geniality! There is a power in it . . .

M. de Boufflers was asked what he would do, if after a long absence he found his wife with child. "I should have my dressing-gown and slippers taken to her room," he said. A great soul spoke there.

"As your husband, Madam, I wish to say this. If your lover ill-treats you while you are alone with him, that is your own affair; but I will not suffer it in my presence, for it reflects on me." A perfect gentleman!

The sublime epigram was the wig hung on the foot of the bed by a barrister husband, while the guilty couple were asleep.

There have been some beautiful revenges too. Mirabeau has depicted admirably, in one of the books he wrote to get his living, the sombre resignation of the Italian woman, condemned by her husband to perish with him in the swamps of the Maremma.

PARTING APHORISMS.

XCIII. TO SURPRISE A WIFE WITH A LOVER AND TO KILL THEM IN ONE ANOTHER'S ARMS, THAT IS NO VENGEANCE: IT IS THE GREATEST SERVICE YOU CAN POSSIBLY DO THEM.

XCIV. TRUST THE LOVER TO AVENGE YOU ON YOUR WIFE.

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MEDITATION XXVIII: COMPENSATIONS.

THE conjugal catastrophe, which a certain number of husbands will not be able to avoid, generally brings first a dramatic scene; but after that things soon calm down. Your resignation, supposing you resign yourself, gradually awakes keen remorse in the souls of your wife and her lover; for their very happiness gives them the measure of the injury they have done you. Without suspecting it, you make a third at all their meetings. The spark of benevolence in the human heart is not so easily quenched as is supposed; the fact is that the two beings, about whom you are so tormented in mind, are the very two who have most goodwill towards you. In those sweet familiar talks, which serve as links between the pleasures of love, and are as it were the embraces of our thoughts, your wife will say to your Sosia: "There is only one thing I want now, Augustus, and that is to know that my poor husband is happy! He is good at bottom, you know. If he were not my husband, if he were my brother (say), there are many little things I would do to please him. He loves me, Augustus, and I can't forget it!"

"Yes, he's a good fellow!"

You see! you become an object of respect to this celibate; he would like to give you any indemnity possible for the wrong he has done you. But he is checked by the haughty disdain, which is mingled with every sentiment you utter, and is expressed in your lightest gesture. During the first few weeks of his minotaurisation a husband is like an actor unaccustomed to the stage, he hasn't learnt how to carry his humiliation with dignity. However, generous characters have not become so rare, for the embarrassed husband not to be able to find a model to study.

Well, so it comes about that gradually you are won by the kindly attentions of your wife; her manner is so genuinely friendly, and will be from now on. This atmosphere of peace in the home is one of the first Compensations, that make the Minotaur less odious to a husband. As it is in the nature of man to accustom himself to the most trying conditions, you are gradually led, in

Meditation XXVIII: Compensations

spite of a lurking pride which no fascinations can altogether subdue, to accept the gratifications your situation brings with it: they are pressed upon you, and you cannot be for ever refusing what after all is rather pleasant. Let us suppose that the conjugal calamity has fallen upon an epicure: he will naturally turn for consolation from the bed to the table; his pleasurable soul, taking refuge in other departments of sensation, will shape his life into new habits. One day on your return from the ministry, where you have spent an earnest hour weighing the value of a hundred francs against the delights of a *pâté de foies gras*, inspired no doubt by the rich and savoury morocco bindings of the Chevet library, you are staggered to find the *pâté* of your dreams proudly installed on the sideboard of your own dining-room. Is it a sort of gastronomical mirage? Hardly daring to believe your eyes, you advance towards him (for a *pâté* is a creature with a soul); you almost whinny as a horse, on smelling the truffles, whose subtle odour leaks through the walls of golden crust. You bend over him not once but twice; all the nervous centres of your palate become intelligent, you sense the joys of a veritable feast. In this state of ecstasy, hotly pursued by a feeling of guilt, you enter the drawing-room, and say to your wife: Really, my dear, our income does not allow of our buying *pâtés*!”

“It cost us nothing!”

“What do you mean?”

“M. Achille’s brother sent it to him.”

Then you catch sight of M. Achille in a corner. The celibate salutes you; he seems pleased, that you make no objection about his bringing the gift. You look at your wife, who blushes; you stroke your beard thoughtfully, and as you do not say no, the lovers guess that you accept the Compensation.

There is a sudden change of government; a husband in high politics, who had hopes the day before of being made director-general, is now in terror of being blotted out of the picture: all the new ministers are hostile to him, for he has lately declared himself of the opposite party. Foreseeing his exclusion, he has gone to seek consolation from an old friend, a devotee of Horace and Tibullus. On returning home, he sees to his surprise that the table is laid for a banquet, and hurries to Madam’s dressing-room, where she is finishing her toilet: “Upon my word,”

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he says humorously, "you haven't shown your usual tact today! You have twenty people to meet me at dinner, who will all have heard..."

"That you are director-general!" she cries, showing him a royal note of hand.

He is staggered! he takes the letter, reads the address, turns it over and looks at the seal, finally musters up courage to open it. Sitting down, he spreads it out on his knee . . . "I was sure," he says, "that whatever ministers were appointed, they would have no use for me!"

"Very likely, my dear, but M. de Villeplaine has answered for you to the Cardinal, in whose confidence he is; he has staked his life on your fidelity . . ."

"M. de Villeplaine?"

There for you is a Compensation so bountiful, that the husband answers with a general-directorial smile:

"Impossible! it's you I have to thank for this, my dear!"

"Indeed it's no doing of mine! Adolphus was moved by an instinctive goodness, coupled with a deep attachment for you . . . Ha ha!"

There comes an evening when one of our horned husbands, kept indoors perhaps by a deluge of rain, or tired of going to spend his evenings at a café, and in one of those moods when life itself seems stale, in sheer despair follows his wife after dinner into her boudoir. He sinks into an easy-chair, and waits like a gloomy sultan for his coffee. By way of justifying this proceeding, he says to himself, "After all, she's my wife!" Meanwhile the siren is preparing his favourite beverage herself; after infusing it with particular care she pours it out, adds sugar, tastes it and hands him the cup. Then with a smile she ventures on a pleasantry, like a trained odalisque, whose duty it is to banish the frown from her master's brow. Up till now he had believed his wife to be stupid; but on hearing a sally so fine as that with which you, Madam, will have fascinated him, he raises his head in the peculiar manner of a dog getting wind of a hare.

"Where the devil did she get that?" he says to himself; "Bah! it must have been a fluke." From the height of his superiority he replies with a clever remark. Madam is ready with a répartee, and the conversation becomes as interesting as it is

Meditation XXVIII: Compensations

lively: this lordly husband is astonished to find his wife's mind so rich in information, on the most various subjects. The right word always seems to come unsought to her tongue, there is a charming originality in her ideas, and above all, she shows a quick and delicate appreciation of what is said to her. She is no longer the wife he knew! Observing the effect she is producing on her husband, she exerts herself to be more and more brilliant, partly to take revenge for his lofty disdain, but no less to do credit to the lover whose light she is reflecting. Though the husband is not altogether unaware of this, he cannot but appreciate a Compensation promising so much entertainment for the future; he even tells himself philosophically, that the lawless passions of women are perhaps a necessary part of their education.

But how are we to describe that Compensation, which most of all flatters husbands? Between the appearance of the Final Symptoms and the dawning of Conjugal Peace, of which we are to treat immediately, there elapses generally about ten years. During this period, that is to say before the couple have signed the treaty reconciling the feminine people with the male sovereignty, before the abyss of revolution is closed, as Louis XVIII expressed it, and the era of the Restoration has begun, it is rarely that a respectable woman has no more than one lover. Anarchy always has its successive phases; the mob-rule of the tribunes, passionate and uncertain, is replaced by that of the military or of the press: for there are few lovers whose constancy is of ten years' duration. Anyhow, our statistics proved, that a respectable woman will only have discharged her physiological debt, call it a diabolical debt if you like, in making three celibates happy; and so it is well within the probabilities that she will have ado with more than one of love's feudatories.

Sometimes it may happen in an interval between adventures, that a wife, whether out of mischief or out of sentimentality, perhaps attracted by the novelty of the idea, will set herself to seduce her husband. Picture to yourself the accomplished Mme. de T., the heroine of our Meditation on Strategy, opening the attack by saying with a smile, "But I have never known you so charming!" From flattery to insidious flattery she goes, rousing your curiosity with jesting confidences, spraying as a gardener the tender shoots of desire, till you swell with pride and she plucks

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the flower. Then comes for the husband the night of indemnification! Like some cosmopolitan traveller, his wife gives him visions of the strange countries she has visited; it is a feast of the imagination, an Arabian night! Her talk is intermingled with foreign phrases; the passionate imagery of the Orient, the half-Oriental flavour of Spanish rhythms, crowd upon your mind with intoxicating effect. She opens to you her album of curiosities turning over the pages with a ravishing coquetry: you have never known her till now! With the woman's gift of assimilating all that is presented to her, she has also been artist enough to soften the tones, so as to create a manner all her own. At the altar you received but one woman, and that one simple and awkward; the generous celibate sends you a company of nymphs. A joyous husband are you, as you see your bed invaded by that troop of classic courtesans, whose flight we detailed in the Meditation on First Symptoms; full of the sunny malice of the South, they come to sport with you beneath the decent hangings of the nuptial couch. The Phœnician, lightly poised upon the rail at your feet, throws on you her garlands of roses; the dancing Chalcidissian dazzles you with white and slender ankles; Unelmana comes talking the langorous dialect of the Ionian Isles, and initiates you into undreamt of joys, in the experience she gives you of a single sensation.

Thus it often comes about that a husband, mad with himself for having disdained such treasures, reflecting also that he has found as much perfidy in the priestesses of Venus as in his lawful wife, hastens in his new mood of gallantry that reconciliation, to which all men of honour come sooner or later. This aftermath of happiness is gathered in with more real rejoicing, than ever was the first crop: the Minotaur took from you gold, he restores to you diamonds. This is perhaps the place to mention a fact of the highest importance: we do not know how to put it better than to say, one can have a woman without possessing her. Like so many husbands, you had probably received nothing from your wife: to make your union perfect, the magic intervention of the celibate was needed. How are we to explain this miracle, the only cure that operates in the absence of the patient? It is nature's secret, my brothers, and we must be content with the comfort it affords to many of us.

Meditation XXVIII: Compensations

But there are still other Compensations no less rich, by which the generous soul of a young celibate will seek to discharge his debt. I remember witnessing the most magnificent amends, that ever could be made by a lover to a husband he had minotaurised. On a hot summer's evening in the year 1817, I was sitting in the hall of a fashionable house in Tortoni, when I saw come in one of those two hundred young men, that one refers to so confidently as one's friends; I could not help admiring the modesty of his demeanour, so well did it set off the splendour of his dress and person. On his arm was an adorable woman, a model of elegance and evidently the sovereign of his heart. They had just got out of an open carriage, which in drawing up had encroached grandly on the footpath; and the lady had consented to sit in one of those open-air boudoirs then in fashion. Following them was the husband, leading by the hand two children pretty as Cupids; so that he could not walk so briskly as the lovers. These were asking their way of the footman in charge of the ices, when the husband entered the house; and now it was that the event occurred. In crossing the entrance-hall the elder man accidentally knocked against a young buck, who chose to take formal offence at being jostled; high words followed, and quickly the quarrel became serious. The dandy was on the point of committing an act, that no self-respecting man would allow himself, when the lover of the wife intervened: he caught the raised arm of the aggressor, swung him round, and while he stood gasping with astonishment, all the swagger gone out of him, said with cool politeness, 'You were saying, Sir?' The effect was superb! more humiliating to the sham hero, than if my young friend had condescended to the act he had been in time to intercept. I have never heard a more perfect speech than that brief, "You were saying, Sir?" It was as if the young celibate had expressed himself thus: "This father belongs to me; I have possessed myself of his honour, and it is for me to defend him. I know my duty, I am his proper champion and will fight for him." The young wife was splendid! Pale with horror, she had clutched the arm of her husband, who was still talking excitedly; and now without saying a word herself, she led him to the carriage together with the children. She was a true aristocrat, one of those women who never forget their dignity, however violent may be their emotions. "Oh Adolphus!"

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she gasped, as the young man stepped gaily into the carriage after them.

"It's all right!" he answered, "that's one of my friends, we have just shaken hands!"

But the next morning the heroic lover received a sword-thrust, which endangered his life and kept him six months in bed. He was the object of the tenderest care, on the part of both wife and husband. Such Compensation surely demanded gratitude!

Some years after, an old uncle of the husband, whose opinions did not square with those of the young friend of the house, and who had it in for him ever since a political discussion they had once had, decided to get him banished from his pleasant position. The spiteful old man even went so far as to inform his nephew, that he must choose between being disinherited and getting rid of this impertinent fellow. To this the worthy merchant replied, for that was the quality of the husband in our story: "I'm sorry, Uncle, but neither for you nor your money will I show myself lacking in gratitude! Let me tell you, this young man would give his life for you also, if I only said the word! He would pass through fire and water for me! Look what he has done: he has defended my honour, he has relieved me of my wife, he brings me customers, yes! he has obtained for me nearly all the business connected with the Villéle loan . . . I owe him life itself! And so do my children! These are not benefits to be forgotten!"

All these Compensations can pass for complete; but unfortunately the same cannot be said of some others. There is the Negative sort, and the Fallacious sort, and even the combination of Fallacious and Negative. For example, I knew an elderly husband possessed by the demon of gambling: nearly every evening his wife's lover came to play cards with him, dispensing to him liberally not only the thrills of a game of hazard, but a hundred or so of francs a month, which he was careful to lose regularly, —Madam refunding them to him of course! The Compensation is Fallacious.

You are a peer of the realm, and your wife has only borne you daughters: at last she has a son! The Compensation is Negative.

The infant which saves your name from oblivion is like—is like—its mother! Happy thought! So the Duchess persuades you that it is yours. The Negative Compensation becomes Fallacious.

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The most exquisite of all Compensation is still this. One morning the Prince of Ligne saw his wife's lover coming, and ran to meet him, laughing and gesticulating like a madman: "My friend," he cried, "last night I made you a cuckold!"

If so many husbands learn to wear gracefully the delusive insignia of sovereignty, and at last come fair and softly to Conjugal Peace, they are doubtless sustained in their philosophy by the *comfortability* of certain Compensations, which those who have not been there will hardly appreciate. A few years roll gently by, and the couple arrive at the last stage of that artificial existence, to which they were condemned at the altar.

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MEDITATION XXIX: CONJUGAL PEACE.

I HAVE so fraternally accompanied my husband and wife through all the fantastic stages of married life, that I who was in the flower of youth at the beginning of this work seem now to have grown old with the couple. While trying to show design, so far as my artistic power enabled me, in the strange succession of events, I have experienced the storms of youthful passion, have striven to maintain rights in wives who did not belong to me, have worn myself out in combating non-existent lovers, and now after so many battles feel an intellectual lassitude, in which I see as it were a pall hung over all the affairs of life. I seem to have a chronic catarrh, and with a shaky hand to be adjusting green spectacles on my nose; while my book, like an old man, spends the latter part of its existence in excusing the follies of the earlier part. I am surrounded by grown up children that I did not beget, and seated opposite to a wife I never married, before a fire I never kindled. I inhabit an antique room, feel my brow wrinkled as a mask, and putting my hand to my heart I ask in alarm, "Does it still beat?"

Like an old procurer, whom no sentiment affects, I only admit a fact when it is attested, as a verse of Lord Byron's says, by two good false-witnesses. I know the world, and it has no illusions for me; my most sacred loves have been betrayed. Soured and gloomy, I trust the face of none. With my wife I exchange looks of terrible meaning; our least words are rapiers, transfixing our lives from start to finish. Horrible is the calm in which I live . . . And they call it peace, the blessed peace of old age! Know that the old pay rent in advance for the cemetery, of which they are to have such long possession! They are given experience of its cold while waiting, that they may catch no colds in the climate of earth. Man dies, as the philosophers tell us, in detail; and death is often disappointed, having already eaten his cake when he thinks to have it. What at last is snatched by the bony hand, can you call it life?

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Oh, to die young and palpitating! that were a destiny to be desired! Is it not to take with one, as a charming poet has sung, all life's illusions? Is it not to be buried as an Oriental king with all one's wealth, to be surrounded in the tomb with jewels and costly furniture, to be unseparated from the gifts of fortune? How many acts of worship should we not offer to the sweet and kindly spirit, that resides in all the good things of this world! But Nature, their mother and ours, let us not thank her for her good intentions, in so gently depriving us of their enjoyment! See with what care she strips us of life's garments one by one, by what slow degrees she retards the circulation and knots the sinews, enfeebles hearing and sight and touch, that we may be as little sensible of death's oncoming as we were of life's, and the naked soul may escape unshivering into the unknown! This maternal care, which Nature shows for the individual, she also extends to that dual entity created by conjugal love. To every couple she sends first the nymph Confidence, who stretching out her hand and smiling fondly, says to them: "You are safe with me for ever!" Then comes Coolness, dragging her feet listlessly and often turning her head to yawn, like a young widow obliged to listen to the conversation of a minister while he writes her pension-warrant. Next Indifference is found to have arrived; she lounges on a divan, not troubling to pull down the skirt which once Desire, more chaste than she, so ardently raised. She turns a cynical eye on the marriage-couch: if there is anything she may be supposed to yearn for, it is green fruit, to quicken the torpid nerves of her cloyed palate. Lastly Experience presents herself; of sober unromantic mien is she, a philosopher who has seen through life. With her finger she points to results: don't ask her as to causes; the calm of victory is her sphere, and not the heat of battle. Madam Experience materialises everything; she helps the tax-collector to reckon up your arrears, and calculates the dowry of your daughter at her birth. At a touch of her wand, life becomes solid and inelastic; where all was fluid before, now it is rigid rock. Passion no longer exists for us; it has been judged to be only a sensation, a physical disturbance that adjusts itself. The heart's desire is a condition, only contentment has real existence, only perfect tranquility is permanent; which means regular hours of eating and sleeping, the disciplining of all the organs.

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"But this is ghastly!" I cried, "I am young and full of life! Perish all the books in the world, rather than my illusions!" I rushed out of my laboratory, and plunged into Paris: when beautiful faces passed me, I knew that I was not really old; the first comely young woman that my eye lit on exorcised the demon, of which I had allowed myself to become the victim. Hardly had I taken a dozen steps in the gardens of the Tuileries, the place I had unconsciously made for, when I beheld the prototype of the matrimonial situation at which this book is arrived. If I had wished to characterise, to present in an ideal personification, the stage of marriage at which this book is arrived. I couldn't have found a more perfect symbol, not even if the Holy Trinity had come down out of Heaven to help me. Picture to yourself a woman of some fifty summers, in a jacket of reddy-brown merino and a hat with a curved-up brim, revealing quaintly at each side the white plumage of a pigeon's wing: she is arm-in-arm with a man in breeches and black silk stockings, and in the other hand holds a green knotted cord, attached to the collar of a pretty English griffon-dog. A little pig-tail, hardly thicker than a quill pen, lies loosely on the back of her neck, which appears yellowish and rather fat above the turned down collar of her jacket. The couple were proceeding with the slow dignity of an ambassador; the husband, a man of seventy at least, stopping complacently every time the griffon made a pretty movement. I hastened my steps so as to get a front view of this lively image of my last Meditation; and as I came level, to my surprise I recognised the Marquis of T., the friend of the Comte de Nocé, who had long owed me the remainder of that interrupted story, you remember, in Meditation XVII. on the Theory of the Bed.

"I have the honour," said he, "to present to you the Marchioness of T."

I made a low bow, then found myself addressing a lady with a pale and wrinkled face: her forehead was adorned with a fringe, whose flat and carefully arranged ringlets, far from producing any illusion, added one disenchantment the more to this face of withered beauty. The lady had on a little rouge, and altogether was as much like a superannuated provincial actress as anything else.

"Well, sir!" said the old man, "what can you find to say against a marriage like ours?"

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"It is protected by the laws of Rome!" I answered with a laugh.

The Marchioness gave me a quick look, expressive both of disapproval and anxiety; it seemed to say, "Have I arrived at my age, only to be thought of as a concubine?"

We went and sat on a bench, in the gloomy grove at the angle of the high terrace, dominating the Place Louis-Quinze. Autumn was already stripping the trees; even as we sat, a light breeze brought down some yellow leaves for the weaving of her crown.

"Well, is the great work finished?" said the Marquis, in that unctuous tone peculiar to members of the old aristocracy. A sardonic smile, playing about his mouth at the same time, showed how much interest he really took in my efforts.

"Nearly, Sir," I answered, "I have brought my husband to the philosophic state of mind, at which you seem to have arrived. But I confess that . . ."

"Ah! you are looking for ideas?" he put out of my head what I was going to say, so I had to let him think that was how I should have finished the sentence. "Here is one for you!" he continued; "You can declare boldly, that when a man comes to the winter of life (I mean a man capable of reflexion,) he no longer has any illusions about the wild joys of love, he denies that they ever exist for any man."

"What! not even in the first week of marriage?"

"There you are! The fact that love only exists in the first week of marriage is proof that it is not love. As for me," he went on, speaking into my ear, "my marriage has come to be a simple speculation: I am sure of the care and attention that I need in my old age, for I buy them by living; you see, I have willed all my fortune to my nephew, so that my wife will only be rich as long as she keeps me alive. Well, you can imagine . . ."

I gave the old man a look of such keen appreciation, that he pressed my hand and said, "You seem to have a good heart, though one cannot swear to anything . . . Listen, I'll trust you with a secret: I have contrived a nice little surprise in my will!" He gave a gay little laugh as he said this, and a look of warmth came into his face that I had not seen before.

A footman was now seen to be approaching, with a coat of

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quilted silk upon his arm. "Come along Joseph!" cried the Marchioness, getting up to take the coat from him; "His Lordship may have caught cold by now."

The old gentleman put on the coat, buttoned it across his chest and taking my arm, led me to a more sunny part of the terrace. "In your book," he said to me, "you will have doubtless written of love from the young man's point of view, the very young man's! Well, if you want to acquit yourself of the duties imposed on you by the word ec-elec—"

"Eclectic," I said with a smile, for he had never been able to get hold of this philosophic term.

"I know the word very well, thank you!" he snapped; then continued grandly, "If you wish to perform your eclectic vow, you will have to give expression also to some more virile ideas of love, such as I will communicate to you now. You need not fear that I shall claim the credit for them, if credit they bring: I should like to bequeath you something, yes,—but don't expect anything else from me!"

"No pecuniary fortune could have the value of a legacy of ideas,—provided always they are good ones! Proceed, Sir, I am very grateful to you."

"Once and for all," said the old man, looking me hard in the eye, "love—does not—exist! What goes by the name of love is not even a sentiment, it is an unfortunate necessity, a link between the needs of the body and the needs of the soul. But let me try and marry my mature thoughts to yours, that together we may reason on this social malady. We are agreed, I believe, that love must be conceived of as either a need of nature or as a human sentiment?" I nodded assent, and he continued: "Considered as a need, love is the last of all to make itself felt, and the first to cease: we do not become amorous till the age of twenty, roughly speaking, and we cease to be amorous at fifty. And during these thirty years, I ask you, how many times would the need make itself felt, if it were not provoked by the inflammatory manners of our towns, or manners apart, if we did not live habitually in the presence, not of one, but of many females? As for our duty to the race, how many children are needed for its preservation? Nature gives the answer: as many as our females have breasts; so that if one die, there will still be one to bear

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his father's name, and at the same time some excessive family of three will just be balanced. But suppose families of three became the rule, where would room be found on the earth for the nations? A population of thirty millions is too heavy for France, her soil hardly suffices to save ten millions from hunger and misery. We should be reduced to some such measure as the Chinese, who drown their children like kittens, if travellers are to be believed. It is a matter of simple arithmetic! two children to make, that is marriage for you. Superfluous indulgence in the pleasures of love is not only licentious, but a great waste of male energy, as I shall prove to you presently. As a need then, how trivial is love! how little pressing, and for how short a period! Compare the daily and hourly insistence of our other needs, our real needs! And observe that while nature makes such rigid demands for the essentials of our existence, she declines to encourage us in any such excess, as our fevered imagination often solicits in love. So far from this indulgence being necessary, the truth is that this latest of our needs is the only one, whose neglect produces no disturbance in the economy of the body. In short, love is a social luxury, like lace and diamonds."

Pausing for a moment to take breath, but evidently requiring no response from me, the old man continued: "Now let us consider love as a human sentiment. We find at the outset a distinction: this sentiment may take the form of sensual pleasure on the one hand, or of heart's passion on the other. Carrying the analysis further, we find as to sensual pleasure, that it is a case of animal magnetism, and therefore is based on two principles, attraction and repulsion. In the human animal attraction is manifested as an acceptance of all such persons or things, as make an appeal to our instinct of self-preservation; while repulsion is manifested as an obedience to the same instinct, when it warns us to reject persons or things as our enemies. Sensual pleasure embraces both of these, for whatever agitates our organism intensifies our consciousness of individual existence, and what else is pleasure but this? Indeed to be complete, pleasure requires the presence of the two magnetic principles; there must be firstly desire and secondly opposition, both of which will be united in the enjoyment of you know what. This is the peculiar character of pleasure, whether it be the sensual pleasure of love or any other: our heart's

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passions for example exhibit the same characteristics, though in a lesser degree. Have you ever asked yourself, in what precisely do you place the pleasure of love? In the possession of a beautiful body? Well, money will obtain for you any evening an admirable odalisque: keep her for a month, and see if this precious sentiment is not thoroughly cloyed! In what then does pleasure lie? Would you love a woman because she was well-dressed, rich and stylish, the owner of a carriage or a reputation? Name that not love! it is vanity, avarice, any egoism you like! Let us say, you love her because she is witty, intelligent: then you are indulging a literary sentiment!"

This was so personal, that I had to interrupt: "Don't you know," I exclaimed, "that Love only opens the store-house of his pleasures to those who have yielded to him wholly, those in whom thought and feeling are merged in a single impulse of the soul, forgetful of gain as of life itself?"

"Dear me!" sneered the old villain; "I wonder if you could find me seven men in any nation, who have sacrificed to a woman, I will not say their lives, for that is a trifle—the tariff of human life under Napoleon never showed a higher valuation than twenty thousand francs, you could always get a man to die in your place for that; and in France at this moment there is a quarter of a million heroes, ready to give their lives for two inches of red ribbon!—no, but seven men who have sacrificed to a woman ten million francs, which they might have saved by sleeping alone for a single night. Ha ha! Dubreuil and Phméja remain less rare than such loves as that of Bolinbroke and Mlle. Dupuis: and when these occur, they are freaks of unknown origin. But we have still to examine this human sentiment, under the form of a heart's passion.

"I say that it is the last of passions, as it is the last of needs, and likewise fails the first. Also it is the least worthy of respect; it promises everything, and in the end its yield is nothing. Ah! speak to me of vengeance, of ambition, of fanaticism! of the miser's or the gambler's passion! There is something virile in all these; they are lasting obsessions, and they make daily such sacrifices as love can only rise to by fits and starts.

"Enough! love is a weakness to be conquered, since it can be conquered; abjure it absolutely, and see what the gain will

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be. No more bother and anxiety, no more of those little scenes that use up so much of human energy; a peaceful and happy life, and from the social point of view, a great increase of personal force for the man. Study the life of any man who has acted powerfully on the human mass, and you will find that this divorce from the chimæra named love was the beginning of his power. Ah! if you knew the energy that is liberated, the magic command that is given to a man, not only of social and intellectual success, but of bodily health and long life, when he breaks away from all human entanglements, and devotes himself to the cultivation of his genius. If you could enjoy only for two minutes the riches, dispensed by God to those sages who recognise in love but a passing need, which it suffices to serve for some six months at the age of twenty; men who shun the gross and constipating beef-steaks of Normandy, to nourish themselves on the roots their Maker has so liberally provided, and who make their beds of dry leaves on the ground, like the hermits of the Thebaid; ah! you would throw away within those two minutes the fifteen merino fleeces that are your nightly covering, you would break that elegant cane of yours, and would go to live in the skies! There you would find the love you vainly seek in the mires of earth; there you would hear a concert more melodious than any of Rossini's, and voices purer than Malibran's! At least so I am told, for I only speak from hearsay; if I had not gone to Germany in 1791, I should know nothing of all this. But there can be no doubt, man has a vocation for the infinite; there is a voice in us all, calling us to God. What are we poor creatures? God is all, and gives all; in this life He has given us a thread to communicate with Him, which is thought, and in the end He will give us the peace of oblivion!" He stopped suddenly, and gazed into the sky with a rapt expression.

"The poor old fellow has gone off his head," I thought to myself. "Excuse me, Sir," I said, "but it would be carrying my devotion to eclectic philosophy very far to include your ideas in my work, for they would destroy it. Everything in it is based on a belief in love, either sensual or platonic: God forbid that my book should end in such social blasphemies! I will rather try to return, by some Pantagruelic subtlety, to my troop of celibates and respectable women; exercising my ingenuity to prove some social utility in their passions and frivolities. I declare, if Conjugal

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Peace induces reasoning so gloomy and cynical, I know many husbands who would prefer war to the end!"

"Young man!" said the Marquis, getting up from the bench, "I can leave you with a clear conscience; I shall not have to reproach myself with not having shown the way to a traveller astray."

"Goodbye, old carcass!" I said under my breath, "Goodbye, spent rocket; goodbye, empty shell of marriage! Though in my book I have given you some characteristics of men dear to me, have hung you for a while among my family portraits, go back now to the picture shop, you and your marchioness, where you will find more of my temporary heroes and heroines, stacked with their faces to the wall! Perhaps you will be bought and hung up as a sign outside an inn: little I care what happens to you!

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A MAN of solitude who believed he had the gift of second sight, having announced to the people of Israel, that if they followed him to the top of a certain mountain he would reveal to them great mysteries, found the road so crowded on the day, that he couldn't help feeling a tremor of pride, though a prophet. But his mountain was at some distance, and at the first halt an artisan remembered that he had to deliver a pair of ornamental slippers to a duke, also a woman became afraid that the soup she had left on the fire might be boiling over, and a merchant considered that this would be a good time to do a deal in bullion; so they all went off. A little further on, two lovers sat down under an olive-tree, and forgot all about the prophet's sermon; for it seemed to them that the promised land was the place they were together in, and the divine word the sweet nothings passing between them. Certain portly persons, having bellies like Sancho's to carry, who for the last mile had been mopping their foreheads with their bandanas, sat down beside a spring, to quench their thirst and recover their breath. Some old soldiers could not walk any further because of their corns, and the mention of tight boots started them off on Austerlitz, where the prophet had to make way for the Little Corporal. At the second general halt, some men of fashion whispered together: "Have you heard him?"

"No! I only came today out of curiosity!"

"I only came because it seemed to be the thing to do!"

The speaker was a man of fashion.

"He's a charlatan, of course!"

The prophet walked steadily on. When he arrived at the appointed place, a plateau from which there was a view of all the country round, he turned to face his followers, but saw only one poor Israelite: he might have said to him as the Prince of Ligne said to the perky little drummer-boy, who was the only one to meet him at the place where he had ordered his regiment to be,—no! it shall be, as the author of this book says to the reader who

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has followed him thus far: "Well, my readers, it seems that there is only one of you!"

Man of God, who have followed me so far, I hope a little recapitulation will not scare you! As we tramped along, I am sure you were saying to yourself, as I was very often, "Where the devil are we going?" Well here is the place for me to ask you, honourable Reader, what is your opinion of the renewal of the tobacco monopoly, and what do you think of the exorbitant taxes this government has put on wine and brandy, on lotteries and gaming-houses, on the carrying of arms, on soaps and silks? Eh?

—I think that as these taxes together contribute a third of the national revenue, we should be in great difficulties if . . .

—You mean in fact, my worthy model husband, that if no one drank or smoked, hunted or gambled, that is to say, if there were no vices in France, the State would be on the verge of bankruptcy: certainly it seems that our chief asset is a mortgage on private vice, as surely as the support of commerce is luxury. Yes! the more closely you look into the matter, the clearer it becomes that our wealth is all based on a moral sore. One of the most important items in the provincial budget is the amount brought in by fees for marriage, that insurance-policy that everyone is so eager to take out against the failure of his good faith: the resulting suits from which make the fortune of the law. To carry this philosophic scrutiny a little further, suppose everyone refrained from taking advantage of his neighbour, and there were no idlers or imbeciles in the world: how would the municipality pay its officers? We should see the police without horses or buckskin breeches very soon, and there would be nothing to do but to tax virtue!

Well, there is likewise a connection between my respectable women and the budget; what is more, I undertake to prove it to you, if you will let me finish my book, as I began it, with a little essay in statistics. You will grant, I think, that a lover is likely to put on a clean shirt oftener than a husband, or than a celibate not in action: that seems to me beyond dispute, indeed a lover can be known from a husband by the condition of his linen alone. The hunter always goes armed, every detail of his toilet is perfect, while his torpid quarry slouches around in yes-

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terday's shirt, with beard untrimmed. It is the same with love as with work: Sterne tells us pleasantly that his laundry-book afforded the best record of his work on *Tristram Shandy*; for the number of shirts showed the parts of the book over which he had sweated most. Just so the lover has no more faithful, no more impartial historian of his loves than his laundry-book. A passion consumes, between both parties, a prodigious number of ties and collars, of petticoats, blouses and other garments necessary to the art of coquetry; for there is great killing power in the brightness and freshness imparted to these adornments by the laundress. This explains the passage in Meditation II., in which I said of the respectable women: "She passes her life in sending clothes to be starched and ironed."

I had a consultation with a lady once, as to the amount at which one should estimate this tax imposed by love: I remember that after fixing it at a hundred francs a year for a woman, she said to me with quaint frankness: "But it depends on the character of the man, some will crumple you more than others." After a profound debate, in which I stipulated for the celibates and the lady for her own sex, it was agreed that on an average two lovers, belonging to the social spheres with which this book is concerned, would probably spend on this item, between them, a hundred and fifty francs a year more than in time of peace. We then discussed at length the amount that would be spent on the purchase of garments of all sorts, amicably agreeing at last, that the collective expenditure would be four hundred francs more than that required on a peace footing: an estimate that was considered mean enough by all the authorities, masculine and feminine, to whose judgment we submitted it. The light shed on this delicate matter by several persons gave us the idea of inviting to a dinner the most knowledgeable of our acquaintance, in order to hear them in debate, and have the very cream of their wisdom to guide us in so important a research. The assembly duly took place; and after some brilliant improvisations the members, glass in hand, gave legislative sanction to the following details of the budget of love.

The sum of a hundred francs was allowed for carriages and messengers. Fifty crowns seemed to be a reasonable amount for the pastries to be eaten in the course of walks, for the bunches

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of violets and tickets for theatres. Two hundred francs was held to be necessary for the heavy toll of dinners at the best restaurants. But in estimating expenditure, account also had to be taken of receipts. It was in the discussion on this subject that a young light-horseman—the King had not yet suppressed his Red Guards at the date of this gathering—slightly inebriated by the champagne, was called to order for daring to say that a couple of lovers were like a distilling apparatus, the way they separated whatever was volatile from one another. Presents of course were the asset that had to be written off, and they proved a burning topic; indeed the debate had to be adjourned, and was continued over several weeks, necessitating a compromise in the end. At the last sitting, the refined Madame de D. addressed the house first, and in a graceful speech, the nobility of whose sentiments was unquestionable, attempted to prove that the gifts of love are never considered for their intrinsic value, and that in fact they seldom have any. The author of this book replied, that all lovers had their portraits done, and this was a substantial gift: but another lady objected that the portrait was only an investment, for men never forgot to ask them back, when they were buying other stock. At this stage a Provençal gentleman sprang up, and delivered a Philippic against the demands made by women on their lovers. He was speaking of their insatiable hunger for silks and furs, for jewels and furniture, when a lady interrupted him to ask, if it was not true that Mme. d'O., whose lover he was known to be, had twice paid his debts.

“You are mistaken, Madam, it was her husband.”

“Order, order!” cried the President, “the last speaker will have to give a dinner to the whole company for having used the word *husband*.”

The Provençal was completely refuted by a lady who set out to prove, that women are much more devoted in love than men. Lovers are an expensive luxury, she said, and a respectable woman would be very lucky any year, that they did not run her into two thousand francs. The discussion was degenerating into personalities, when the President announced that a vote would be taken on a series of motions, in which he had attempted to sum up the opinions of the commission. These conclusions were all carried, the gist of them being as follows: that the annual expenditure on presents

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between a pair of lovers would amount to five hundred francs, this figure to be understood to comprise: (1) the money spent on trips into the country, (2) the chemist's bill, occasioned by colds caught walking on damp evenings in the park, or in coming out of theatres, the commission holding that the sums spent on the purchase of necessary remedies were veritable presents; (3) the postage of letters, and sealing-wax for same; (4) journeys, for the purpose of seeing one another; (5) all miscellaneous expenses incidental to meetings, excepting only such wanton extravagance, as in the opinion of the commission might be gratifying to chorus-girls, but not to lawful wives—of somebody else! A summary having been made of these pecuniary statistics, it was revealed that a passion would cost its two victims, on the average, fifteen hundred francs a year altogether; and that whether the expenditure was mainly on one side or equal and reciprocal the total would not vary considerably. This represented solely expenditure due to the passion, that is to say money that would not have been put into circulation had the passion not existed; and that it was a minimum figure the assembly was almost unanimous. And so, my dear Sir, as we have proved beyond dispute by our Conjugal Statistics in Meditations I., II. and III., that there exists in France a floating mass of at least a million and a half illegitimate passions, it follows inevitably,

THAT THE CRIMINAL CONVERSATIONS OF A THIRD OF THE POPULATION OF FRANCE CONTRIBUTE A SUM OF TWO AND A QUARTER MILLIARDS TO THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF MONEY IN CIRCULATION, THAT FLOW OF SOCIAL BLOOD WHOSE HEART IS THE TREASURY ;

THAT THE RESPECTABLE WOMAN GIVES LIFE NOT ONLY TO THE CHILDREN OF THE PEERAGE, BUT ALSO TO ITS INVESTMENTS;

THAT OUR INDUSTRIES OWE THEIR PROSPERITY SOLELY TO THIS *systolary* MOVEMENT;

THAT THE MARRIED WOMAN IS A SPECIES ESSENTIALLY *consumens* AND *budgetofex* ;

THAT THE LEAST SLACKNESS IN LOVE MEANS INCALCULABLE LOSSES FOR THE TREASURY AND ITS STOCK-HOLDERS;

AND THAT AT LEAST A THIRD OF EVERY MAN'S INCOME IS DRAWN FROM A MORTGAGE ON HIS WIFE'S INCONSTANCY.

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I see you opening your mouth to lecture me both on morals and on economics, I see you arming yourself with the knowledge of good and evil: but, my dear unicorn—or bicorn, to give you full honours—is not happiness the end, which all societies should set before themselves? This is the view which leads poor wretches of kings to take so much trouble about their peoples! It is true that a respectable woman has no throne or police-force or courts of justice, she has only a bed through which to work: but if by this ingenious machine our half-million give happiness to a million celibates, and to half a million husbands into the bargain, do they not attain, quietly and without ostentation, that end which every government has in view, namely to give the greatest possible happiness to the greatest possible number?

—But what of that train of sorrows, what of the children disowned, what of . . .

—Allow me to interpose a consoling word, with which one of our wittiest satirists concludes an indictment: “Man is not perfect!” The most we can hope for is that the disadvantages of our institutions may be less than the advantages, we can then pronounce them excellent; for the human race as a whole is not placed between good and bad, but between bad and worse. And so, if the work we have now accomplished succeed in diminishing, not the bad elements, but the worse in the institution of matrimony, by its exposure of the follies and contradictions to which our moral prejudices give rise, its author will have the fairest claim a man can present, to be enrolled among the Benefactors of Humanity. In arming husbands for the strife, will his work not tend to enforce more discretion on women; which means more violence in the thwarted passions of lovers, consequently more money for the treasury, more demand for the products of industry and agriculture?

By this last Meditation the author feels that he has completely discharged the vow of eclecticism, which he took on entering on this work; and he hopes to get a verdict on every count, like an attorney-general, without disclosing his own judgment on the case. Why should you want a conclusive axiom here? As the work stands you can draw what conclusions from it you like. You can pronounce it to be a development of the opinion expressed by Tronchet in his old age, that the legislators of marriage were

Meditation XXX: Conclusion

much more concerned about the children than about husband or wife. Or you can find in it a confirmation—and in this we should be more inclined to agree with you—of the parting words of that Capuchin, who preached before Anne of Austria: he had castigated the vicious life of the court, and seeing the Queen and her ladies indignant at his too outspoken attack, he added before coming down from the throne of truth: "But you are all honest women, it is we unhappily who are the Samaritans!" You could bring together the most opposite ideas on this subject, and you would find truth in both. Bear in mind, that this book was not undertaken either for or against marriage, it only professes to give you the most exact possible description of it. If our examination of the machine has enabled us to improve a single part, or if by cleaning a rusty axle we have set a wheel going, allow that the workman has earned his wages.

If on the other hand you find that the author has been impertinent or over-severe in his statements, if he has often generalised from exceptional cases, if he has been too neglectful of the commonplace flatteries offered to women from time immemorial, by all means let him be crucified! only do not credit him with intentions hostile to the institution itself: his quarrel is only with the men and women who abuse it. Since marriage itself has not overthrown marriage, he knows that it is unassailable! It may be that the reason of all the complaints is simply, that man only remembers his misfortunes; it may be that he accuses his wife as he accuses life, for marriage is truly a life within life.

However, people accustomed to take opinions ready-made from newspapers may complain, that we have carried the mania for eclecticism too far: well, if they absolutely must have something in the nature of a peroration, it can be managed for them without difficulty. Some words of Napoleon's served as an opening for this book: why should it not close in the same way? Here goes then! In a full session of the Privy Council the first Consul uttered this fulminating sentence, which constitutes at once a eulogy and a satire on marriage, and admirably sums up the argument of this book: "Unless a man were wakeful, I should not wish him a wife."

The Physiology of Marriage

POSTSCRIPT.

AND will you marry?" asked his friend the Duchess, when the author had read his manuscript to her. (You remember the two ladies to whom the author paid homage in the introduction: this was one of them.)

"Certainly, Madam!" he answered; "To meet a woman bold enough to accept me will be my chief desire henceforth."

"Is it resignation or vanity?"

"That is my secret!"

"Allow me to relate to you, Sir Doctor of the art and science of marriage, a little Oriental fable: I read it in one of those collections, that used to be offered to us every year in the guise of an almanac. In the early days of the Empire, as you may have heard, the ladies had a craze for a game called Diadesté, which consisted in saying this word, Diadesté, whenever you accepted anything from one of the players, and of course in trying to give them things without their remembering: this was where the excitement came in. A game would last whole weeks, so there were all sorts of opportunities for catching a player out: they had to say the sacramental word, whatever it was you gave."

"Even a kiss?"

"Oh! I've won many a point at Diadesté that way!" she said laughing. "I suppose it was through the game being in fashion that my fable came to be published: it showed that the game is of Arabian or Chinese origin. Well, if I tell it you," she said, and stroked the side of her nose with one finger, in a charming attitude of coquetry, "Will you put it at the end of your book?"

"I'm sure it would be one more treasure added to the many I have received from you: but how can I ever discharge my debt? Impossible! I may as well increase it: your fable shall appear in my book."

"Very well!" she cried, and with a malicious smile began the narrative.

A certain philosopher had composed a very complete treatise

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on all the tricks that our sex is capable of playing; and to arm himself against us, he carried it everywhere with him. One day when he was on his travels, he arrived at an Arab encampment. At the approach of the stranger a young woman, who was sitting in the shade of a palm-tree, got up and invited him so kindly to rest in her tent, that he didn't see how he could refuse. The lady's husband was away from home at the time. But the honours of hospitality could not have been better dispensed: the philosopher was given a rich carpet to sit on, and he had hardly time to look round him, when his gracious hostess was offering him fresh dates and an alcarazas full of camel's milk. He could not help noticing the exquisite beauty of the hands which held the dish and the cup . . . Rallying himself, the philosopher took out his book and began to read, in the hope of quieting the sensations which the charms of the young Arab gave him; for his learning told him, that here were dangerous snares. His disdain offended the seductive creature, and put her on her mettle; in a melodious voice she said to him: "That must be a very interesting book, since you find it the only thing worth your attention. Would it be indiscreet to ask what science it treats of?"

The philosopher answered, without raising his eyes: "The subject of this book is not one for women."

Curiosity now added to the determination of the young Arab. She sat opposite him in silence for a while, only advancing the prettiest little foot that ever left a fugitive imprint on the shifting sands. The philosopher saw it out of the corner of his eye, and began to feel his attention wandering; soon his eye, too sorely tempted, began to travel from the foot with its wondrous promises, upward as far as the bosom, which he found more disturbing still. At last his ardent gaze met the flame which played in the dark pupils of the desert queen; and it was then that she begged him again, in a voice so sweet and shy, to tell her what was the book he was reading. The philosopher now was only too delighted to tell her anything: "It is a work of my own," he said, though the matter was supplied to me by others: it contains all the tricks ever played by women."

"What, absolutely all?" cried this child of the sun.

"Yes, all! And as a result of my constant study of women, I no longer have any fear of them."

The Physiology of Marriage

"Oh! I see," said the woman, lowering her long lashes, to hide a dance in her eye. Then suddenly she flashed a look at the boastful one, that made him forget his book and the tricks it contained: behold our philosopher the most passionate man on earth! Thinking he discerned in the lady's manner a hint of coquetry, the stranger made so bold as to venture on a declaration. Well, how could you expect him to resist? the sky was blue, the desert a sheet of gold; a gentle wind breathed love into the tent, and the wife of the Arab seemed to contain in herself all the fires with which she was surrounded. There came a melting look into her eye, and by a slow inclination of her head, which seemed to send a wave through the luminous air, she consented to listen to the words of love. The sage was already intoxicated by flattering hopes, when the sound of a galloping horse was heard, and his hostess sprang up crying, "We are lost! my husband is coming! He is jealous as a tiger and as pitiless! In the name of the Prophet, and if you love life, hide in this chest!"

"The terrified author, seeing no other way to avoid the danger, stepped into the chest and doubled himself up, the woman shutting the lid on him, locking it and taking the key. Out she goes then to meet her lord and master, who presently comes in with his arm around her; and his treasure says to him, after some caresses to put him in good humour: "I must tell you a strange adventure I have had."

"I am listening, my gazelle;" says the Arab, sitting down on his carpet, and crossing his legs in the Oriental manner.

"A sort of philosopher came to-day, who claims to have collected in a book all the deceitful tricks, that my sex is capable of: before he had been here long, this pretended sage began to make love to me . . ."

"Well?" cried the husband.

"I am afraid I listened to him," she said coolly, "he is young and very ardent: you came just in time to save my tottering virtue!"

The Arab bounded like a young lion, and drew his kandjar, his eyes blazing with fury. Our philosopher could hear everything in the chest, and wished his book to Ahriman, along with all the women and men of Arabia Petrea. "Fatme!" roared the jealous husband, "if you value your life, answer me truly: where is the traitor?"

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As if alarmed by the storm which it had amused her to rouse, the beautiful Fatme threw herself at the feet of her lord, and looking tearfully up at the threatening blade, indicated the chest with a turn of her eyes. He strode to it, found it locked and stood over her again: "The key!" he thundered. Getting up with a shamefaced look, she took it from her girdle and humbly presented it, the insensate man snatching it and making again for the chest. But as he bent down to insert it in the lock, Fatme went off into a peal of laughter. Involuntarily the Arab stopped, and looked round at his wife in astonishment, not unmixed with a vague anxiety.

"At last I have won my gold chain!" she cried, jumping and clapping her hands in childish glee; "you forgot to say Diadesté when I gave you the key! Come along, give me the chain; and perhaps your memory will be sharper next time!"

The crestfallen husband dropped the key, and going down on his knees made a formal presentation of the coveted chain. At the same time he offered to bring his darling Fatme a jewel from every caravan that passed in the year, if she would give up playing such cruel tricks on him; then as he was an Arab, and did not like parting with gold even to his wife, he remounted his courser and rode off to grumble to himself in the desert, for he loved his wife too well to let her see his regrets. The young woman then opened the chest, where the philosopher lay, more dead than alive: as he got up and straightened himself painfully, she said to him with humorous gravity: "Sir Doctor, do not forget to include that trick in your collection."

"Madam, I understand!" said I to the Duchess; "if I marry, I shall probably succumb to some unknown devilment. But in my handling of the situation, be sure, I shall offer a model of behaviour to the admiration of my contemporaries: I shall make it only the beginning of my marriage!"

Paris, 1824-29.



